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LONGMANS' HEROES OF RAJASTHAN



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IN ancient ~~India~~ the city of Balabhipoora was the seat of government of a rajah the fame of whose victories spread far and wide. Balabhipoora was a large and stately city, surrounded by strong walls. It was the capital of an extensive and rich territory. But its real power lay not in its fortifications or its wealth but in the personality of its rajah, Silladitya. He was a stern and wise ruler who desired the prosperity and happiness of his subjects. There were many sovereigns in ancient India as just and wise as he ; but there were few so feared by their foes. Silladitya's victories in war had made the names of Balabhipoora and its king a terror to all rival or marauding princes. For Silladitya knew not defeat. States stronger than his sent armies against him, only to be overthrown ; while those less powerful paid him homage and tribute. Thus it was that under its wise king Balabhipoora flourished exceedingly.

Now it was not merely to his prowess in war that Silladitya owed his series of victories. He was the child of the Sun and to him his father had given a charm against which the wiles and the bravery of his foes were unavailing. Within the garden grounds of the palace there was a lake fed by a sacred fountain. When the war clouds gathered

and Silladitya's men-at-arms were assembling and his war elephants were being caparisoned with their battle-trappings, he used to go in secret to the lake and utter the incantation his father had taught him. At this magic bidding the fountain bubbled up and out of its translucent gushing waters came forth the divine seven-headed horse which is daily harnessed to the dazzling chariot of the Sun. Upon this splendid steed the rajah would leap and lead his men out to certain victory. His subjects knew of the magic power, but only one had discovered how the king called the sacred animal to his aid. This was the chief minister, a subtle and treacherous man whose ways were not the king's ways and who had long nursed a sullen hatred towards his master. This evil-minded servant had followed the rajah once to the sacred pool and heard him command the magic steed to come to aid him. Since he had learned the secret, he awaited eagerly the opportunity to betray his master.

Now it happened that some months later the state of Balabhipoora was invaded by an army from the north. When the enemy approached the city, the wicked minister stole out by night to the hostile camp and prayed an audience with their king. When he was come into the presence, he said: "King, my master the rajah is not invincible, and if you will give me gold and land"—(and

he named his heavy price)—“I will unfold unto you his secret, and thus you will overcome him and be master of Balabhipoora.” The northern king rejoiced at the diwan’s treachery and promised him twice what he asked if he could deliver Balabhipoora into his hands. Then the minister told him how the king would on the morrow, as was his custom before battle, repair to the sacred lake and conjure the magic horse from its crystal depths. “But if those limpid waters were defiled, O king,” he said, “then my master Silladitya will call in vain, for his father the Sun will be angered and will aid him no more. Thus and thus only will he fail in the clash of battle on the morrow.” Then the king wrote out the grants of land and ordered gold and jewels in great quantity to be set aside for the traitor. The latter, hastening back to Balabhipoora, in the midnight poured into the fountain the blood of a cow.

When the dawn came and Silladitya’s hosts were gathering for the fray the rajah made his lonely pilgrimage to the lake. Standing by the fountain, he uttered the magic words. But the crystal waters did not bubble up and the horse did not come at his command. Then he knew that in some way he had been betrayed, though he guessed not the author of his undoing. Filled with despair at the thought that his father heeded him no longer, he returned and placed himself at the head of

his army. Shortly after the battle began the tide of victory turned against him for the first time in his life. After dreadful carnage, he was overwhelmed and died fighting bravely to the last. The people of the city of Balabhipoora were put to the sword and its splendid buildings were looted and destroyed.

When the king fell, his body was carried into the burning city, and funeral pyres were built for him and for his chiefs. According to Rajput custom the women mounted the pyres, each on that of her husband, and gave their lives to the flames of their own kindling. Upon the king's pyre all his wives died thus in true Rajput nobility of chastity, save one only who chanced to be absent from the city on a pilgrimage to her native land. This was some distance from Balabhipoora, and while she was making the long return journey a messenger met her and gave her the news of the king's death and the capture of the city. Then a great grief fell upon her and she became sick unto death, for she was heavy with child. Broken-hearted, she took refuge in a cave by the roadside. There she gave birth to a son whom, as she lay dying, she commended to the care of a Brahmin priest, begging him to bring the boy up as a Brahmin but to let him marry a Rajput woman. The Brahmin faithfully performed his trust. He took the motherless babe to his daughter and there it was tenderly reared by her and her

husband as if it had been their own. They called it Goha—"the cave-born," and the child grew up happily among the Brahmin's grandchildren.

But as the days of infancy passed, Goha became less lovable and his disobedience, temper and waywardness were a great grief to the good Brahmin and his foster-parents. He was violent-tempered and discontented under the strict rules of the Brahmin household. He quarrelled with his foster brothers and sisters; he lost no chance of playing with Rajput children; he would fight with strange boys and was forever running out into the jungle to hunt wild beasts and birds with stone and knife and spear. All this grieved the kind Brahmin and his daughter, for the boy was fair to look on and they loved him. But the boy grew worse and worse, more and more unmanageable till one day in his eleventh year he disappeared altogether, running off to live with the Bhils on the jungle-clad hills.

Now these dark-skinned woodland folk, living in their caves and tree-shrouded hollows the life that their ancestors lived in the days before the Aryans came to India, were companions after Goha's heart. With them he loved to track the wild beasts of the forests, deer and boar, wolf and cheetah. He blew poisoned arrows at the monkeys and the birds and hammered to death with stones the snakes and other reptiles. Dwarf people are

the Bhils, wild and shy as the game they stalk, silently creeping foot by foot through the dense undergrowth. It is the life of prehistoric man that they live to-day still almost as they lived it when Goha fled from the kindly Brahmin home and joined a tribe who dwelt in the land of Edur southward of what is now called Mewar or Udaipur. Goha, too, was cave-born, a child of nature, undisciplined and fearless. So the little folk welcomed the handsome lad, wonderful to them because of his strange fair beauty and his strong lithe comely body, already exceeding their inches. Goha rejoiced in the life and grew in stature and in hunter's cunning till he had nothing to learn from his new forest friends. More than that : he was soon the accepted leader of all the young Bhils, and in the forays for food he was ever the most cunning tracker, the boldest at encounters with jungle terrors. Thus it came about that he grew in authority with his companions till one day, deep in the heart of the jungle, after some desperate encounter with a savage boar, he was hailed by the youths as their king. As a jest at first he was chosen with mock solemn ritual. The oldest of the boys drew blood from his finger and smeared Goha's fair forehead with the blood, making the *teeka* mark, the sign of kingship always made on the brow of a ruler. But the mock ceremony pleased the chief of the tribe when he heard of it, for he loved and

admired Goha. So he bade his people look to the Rajput lad as their leader when he died. And in the fulness of time this was so. Goha was granted by the dying chief all the land of Edur, and he ruled the tribe and took wives and bred a sturdy line. For eight generations his descendants—the Ghelotes as they were called—ruled Edur and the Bhil peoples.

But after many years, there was discontent in the tribe. Goha's blood was proud and wild and his descendants came to be hated for the exercise of much harsh authority. They were aliens, too. So a plot was formed and the chief was attacked treacherously while he hunted. He was slain and his family fled for their lives. Of the chief's sons only one escaped. He was but three years of age. He was carried away in safety by his mother to a Brahmin priest, one of the descendants of Goha's foster-mother. These kinsmen had long been the family priests of the Ghelotes and now the tie of blood won the tiny prince security in a mountain fortress where a friendly Bhil watched over him. But the tribe were eager to avenge the tyranny of the Ghelotes and sought the royal baby to kill him and so make an end of the line. So the priest, anxious to fulfil his trust, had the boy hidden in a sacred town called Nagindra, some ten miles north of what is now Udaipur. Here, where a three-peaked mountain towers high, the Brahmins guarded the shrine of Eklinga

or Siva and his sacred bull. In this secluded jungle valley beneath the mountain slope the boy and his mother lived hidden. He was not given princely rank but went by the name of Bappa—"Child"—and was reared in the lowly style of Indian jungle childhood. He played with the other village children and, when he was old enough, he was sent out at dawn with the other boys to herd the cattle. He spent happy days in the fields and jungles, playing or resting beneath the great forest trees, bathing in the streams by which the animals grazed and watching the solemn creatures as he lay contented with his comrades in the long grass. Just the sweet and simple Indian jungle life he led—the humble life, so close to nature, lived to-day as it was yesterday and all the many yesterdays before Bappa delighted in the sunlight and in the suppleness of his limbs, racing after his wandering cattle or joining in some merry rustic romp with his boy playmates. Thus he spent the days of boyhood, ever increasing in beauty and in that strength of character and masterfulness which compelled the other boys to hearken to his voice in all things till he became the master of their rustic revels and their accepted leader.

One day when he was growing a big, strong, comely boy, there fell a festival whereon each year the Indian jungle boys and girls spend the hours of sunshine swinging from

the branches of the forest trees. That morning all the village girls, led by the daughter of the chief of Nagindra, had gone out as usual to swing. But they had forgotten to take ropes and in the groves and glades around the temple there were none. While they were lamenting their forgetfulness Bappa came along. The little maids shyly greeted the handsome lad, whom they all secretly admired and wished to have as their playmate, and told him of their plight. When they asked him to fetch them ropes, he told them he would, but only on one condition, that they should first play a game with him. Nothing loth, the chief's daughter asked what game it was. Bappa, already not a little proud of his growing manhood and masterfulness, replied : "Let us play at your all being married to me." And the girls gleefully assented, seeing nothing wrong ; for in all lands childish romance takes early form, and the game of pretending at the ceremony and dignity of the marriage rite pleases all children. So Bappa had his way, and the whole pretty ritual was carried through. He and the chief's daughter were tied to each other by shawl and scarf, and so with the others. He and she and all the girls, six hundred of them, clasped hands in turn, and danced round a tree. In childish glee, they made mock ceremony, dancing, handclasping and doing all that they had seen their elders so often do. Bappa then got them ropes and through

the long hours of sunshine the girls swung themselves merrily from the tree branches until the sun sank low and they had to return to their village homes. And the happy little maids, wearied with romping, thought no harm of their mock scarf-tying and never told their mothers of their game with Bappa. For them the game was simply a game ; but for the boy it was otherwise. Bappa's pride and love of mastery were deep and the game meant much to him in its triumph over all the other boys and his influence over all the girls. So in the evening he bade his fellows take oath not to say what had happened and to tell him anything that was said about his secret pastime.

Among the cows which Bappa tended the belle of the herd was a brown one, a beautiful large and well shaped creature and a rich milk-giver. It was just about the time of the marriage game that this cow began to run dry. Each evening, no matter if she had grazed on the richest of the local pastures, her udders were pulled in vain at the milking shed. Suspicion fell on Bappa. For many days continuously she gave no milk and his elders thought that Bappa was stealing the milk to drink, so they gave some of the other lads orders to watch him sharply. Now Bappa was a lad as honest as he was proud, and he was very angry when he knew, as he soon did, that he was suspected and watched. He spoke out boldly that the udders of the cow were never touched by him

and that he could not explain the mystery. He did not merely deny the theft. He determined to follow the cow all day till he found out who it was who tampered with her. So the next day he wandered where she wandered. Leaving the others to graze, he found the path that she took through the woods and, tracking her down, he came out into a wooded valley. There in a thicket he found the cow. Hidden in the trees was a shrine of Siva and from the cow's udders the rich milk flowed out upon the altar stone. Close at hand lay a hermit in a trance, a holy man who had foresworn the world and its desires and by penances and fastings was seeking saintship. Bappa, in his surprise and excitement at the discovery, which meant so much to his suspected honour, made bold to address the *yogi*. Recalled from his meditations, the latter gazed long at the handsome lad, and by his divine gift of second sight he read his history and recognised that he was no ordinary herdsboy. For some seconds Bappa stood awed before the piercing but kindly gaze. Then, humbly making obeisance and kneeling with reverentially joined hands, he told the hermit that the cow was one of his herd, that she wandered daily, how suspicion had fallen on him and how he had ventured to follow her that day. The *yogi* bade him rise and told him that the holy creature had come daily to the shrine to offer milk to Siva and to him the god's servant.

Thenceforward Bappa, who had told his story in the village, daily made his way to the shrine whither the cow always of her own accord preceded him. And he took kindly to the hermit's teachings, listening with rapt attention when his *guru* unfolded to him the mysteries of Siva. Bappa delighted, too, to act as servant to the *yogi*, washing his feet and bringing him offerings of flowers, rice and fruit. Gradually the boy became more and more estranged from his usual village life. He devoted himself to the service and worship of the god. Many a night he spent in vigil by the shrine, while the hermit prayed; and then Bappa would fall asleep beside the altar. The *yogi* welcomed the lad and encouraged him in his devotions and at last hung around his neck the three-fold sacred cord. Thereafter Bappa almost deserted his home for the shrine and after many months of devotion he had a vision one night. Siva's wife, the goddess Bhavani or Kali, appeared to him clad in her robes of scarlet and seated on her tiger. In her hands she held the weapons with which he was destined to win great victories and become ruler over wide territories. Kneeling before her, he was invested with a lance, bow and arrows. Around him she bound the belt supporting the two-edged sword, forged by Viswakarma, the smith of the gods. So vast and heavy was this sword that none but god or hero could wield it. The vision

frightened Bappa, but it made him also proud and glad. When the morning came he knelt before the *yogi*, putting his young soft hands between the old man's worn ones and told all he had seen. The *yogi* listened eagerly. Then he laid his hand in blessing on the lad's head and bade him rise. "My life-work is done," he said. "To-morrow I shall attain the peace of heaven. Freed forever from the sadness and desires of this world, no longer bound upon the wheel of change, I shall leave the earth. Go now to your home, but be back here at dawn to-morrow that I may give you my final benediction."

Now Bappa was tired with the past night's vigil and his troubled dreams, so it happened that it was well past dawn before he reached the shrine next day. The hermit was gone. The lad searched the surrounding jungle, but there was no sign of his master. Then, raising his eyes, he saw him, his face alight with a holy joy, standing in a golden chariot. This was supported by resplendent winged figures, *Apsaras*, the virgin attendants of the gods, sent from Indra's cloud-home to translate the *yogi* to his blest abode. The old man saw Bappa and smiled on him, saying: "Reach upwards and receive my blessing." Then a miracle occurred, for Bappa grew till he was twenty cubits high. "Open thy mouth" the *yogi* commanded. Bappa did so, and his master spat down upon him. The lad was so

repelled for the moment at such an action that he moved his face aside and the spittle fell not into his open mouth but on to his foot. "Hadst thou done as I bade thee," said the *yogi*, "thou shouldst have been immortal. As it is, no weapon can ever harm thee." And then in the golden car he was taken by the *Apsaras* out of Bappa's sight.

Bappa went to his home and told his mother all that had happened, the vision and the hermit's final words. Astonished out of her long silence, she confessed to him that he was no peasant's son. She told him his history and how he alone of all his father's sons had been rescued and hidden by the Brahmin descendants of Goha's foster-mother. So Bappa left off herding cows and set out from the village to seek his great promised fortunes. It was indeed well for him that he did so, for it was at this time that the serious consequences of his boyish freak, the game with the village girls on the festival day, first developed. The chief's daughter was now of marriageable age and her father desired to give her hand to a young man of her social rank who would be a worthy husband for her. But, while the marriage preparations were going forward, a disastrous disclosure amazed the enraged father and his people. The Brahmin, who was engaged to draw out the girl's horoscope, announced that the planetary signs indicated that she was already a wife. Consternation

was followed by the wildest general indignation when the girl tearfully and timidly confessed to the "game at marriage" years before on the festival swing day. It was realised that not only the chief's daughter but all the girls now of marriageable age were the lawful wives of Bappa. For according to the strict law and custom the tying of scarves and the claspings of hands and the songs and the dance round the tree had robbed six hundred maidens of all chance of honourable wedlock.

Bappa might have paid with his life for his purposeless indulgence of a whim to show his mastery over the girls and his boy comrades. But he was warned and fled in time, taking refuge in Chitore, a fortress city built in picturesque majesty on a vast rock standing lonely in the midst of a plain. The sovereign of Chitore was a kinsman of Bappa, his mother's brother, of the ancient house of Malwa, and he accorded him a generous reception. Indeed so generous was it, and such favour did his uncle show the young man that he was soon the object of the bitter jealousy and hatred of the Chitore nobles. Who was this wastrel, this herds-boy and wanderer, they asked, who was loaded with favours and treated so royally? Whence had he come? What justification was there, what record of courage and achievement had he to deserve such promotion and such honour? So it fell out that there grew to be great

discontent among the leading subjects of the ruler of Chitore; and when the State was presently threatened with invasion they refused to lead their men-at-arms to join the King's army. Let this wonderful herdsman-prince, Bappa, the homeless wanderer and beggar, of whom the Rajah thought so much, guard his uncle's realm. If he were half the hero the latter believed him, he could defeat the enemies of the State without their aid. Better to yield their estates to him than to fight under his leadership.

But Bappa's courage was high, and these intrigues and jealousies only served to incite him the more to prove his skill and show his mettle. He set to work to organise the royal forces, and one by one the chiefs shamefacedly gave in their allegiance. The invader was utterly defeated; and then the nobles, recognising Bappa's consummate military skill and courage, begged him to rule over them. Bappa had claimed the hand of the daughter of the defeated sovereign and, full of pride in his new position, he yielded to the disloyal suggestions of the nobles. Even in the most heroic there are blemishes—serious ones often. Nothing can excuse the ingratitude of the young prince towards an uncle who had welcomed him so warmly and loaded him so with honour and favours. But Bappa, having treacherously grasped at supreme power and defeated and deposed his uncle with the aid

of the rebellious nobles, made a good ruler. He reigned over Chitore for many years and added to his honour and glory by the extension of the State territories in all directions. The *yogi* had bestowed on him the title of "regent of Eklinga (Siva)." Now as lord of Chitore Bappa called himself "the sun of the Hindus, the preceptor of princes and the universal lord." Governing his dominions wisely and firmly, he gained in power yearly. He took many wives, one of them being a princess from the island of Bunderdhiva, whose dowry included the statue of the guardian "Vyanmata" (the mother), whose favour shone upon Chitore for many years. Only by the cowardice of one of its later rajahs was its glory finally eclipsed.

Legendary mystery surrounds the last years of Bappa's life. It is at least known that his son by the Bunderdhiva princess ruled in succession to him. But whether he died, or abdicated and retired to lead an ascetic life, is not certainly recorded. The most generally accepted account of his end is that he left Chitore when he was well stricken in years. But even this seems contradicted by the continuation of this version which makes him take his wives and family and lead an army into the far west where he was everywhere victorious. He penetrated, so the story says, to Khorasan, subduing the wild tribes of the northern hills and there he established another kingdom. He demanded

and obtained homage from the kings of the West, the lords of Ispahan, Kandahar, Kashmir, Irak, Iran and Kafiristan. All this sounds like a series of most unlikely achievements for an aged man. When it is added that he took as wives the daughters of all these western princes and that they bore him 130 sons, the whole legend becomes frankly incredible and unhistorical. These 130 sons are said to have been the fathers of 130 Pathan tribes. The story goes on to relate how he at last left Khorasan. Surrendering his rank and power and dominions he retired to sacred Mount Meru, there to live a *rishi's* life, spending nights and days in prayer and fasting. There, it is recorded, he died aged one hundred, or, as some versions have it, was buried alive. The legend is that, when it was known that he was dead, the people of Chitore and those of Khorasan contended for the privilege of performing the last rites over his body. The Hindus of Chitore desired to burn it; the people of Khorasan wished to bury it. The rivalry was keen and hot words passed in the very presence of the dead. After the heated argument had lasted long, someone more daringly inquisitive furtively raised the corner of the pall to gaze at the dead hero-king. To his amazement there was no longer a corpse there. The astonished mourners threw back the cloth and no sign of the body was there. It had completely disappeared. But the earth on

which it had rested was bright with growing lotus blossoms.

So ends the legend of Bappa Rawul, whose successors at first bore his title of "rawul" though later they were styled "rana." Bappa was ancestor of the Sesodias, of the Rajput tribe of Mewar. The lords of Mewar have always claimed the title of "the regent of Siva" as heirs to Bappa, and they fulfil the duties of high priest at the Siva temple.

THE SACK OF CHITORE.

THE fate of the city of Chitore lay in the lap of a woman. This was no traitorous scheming *Delilah-woman*, but *one as high-souled, chaste and true as ever was Rajput wife*. And that is saying much, for among no people in history has feminine chastity reckoned higher or given rise to more wonderful examples of wifely devotion than among the inhabitants of Rajputana. The wondrous woman who brought such disaster on Chitore, as pure as she was beautiful, was Padmāni, a princess of Ceylon. She was wife of Prince Bheemsi, regent of Mewar during the minority of his nephew the Rana Lakumsi. The fame of Padmani's beauty had spread over all India, and it is tradition that she was regarded as the loveliest woman of all Hindustan in her day. Great were the rejoicings and festivities when in the dawn of sweet womanhood she came from the south to Chitore. But her beauty proved a curse, for it inflamed the heart of an alien prince with a lust which brought about the ruin of her husband's home. As Greek Helen's was the face that "launched a thousand ships and burned the topmost towers of Ilium" so the lovely Padmani brought with her fairness a dowry of war and rapine to her new home.

Majestic in its desolation, like some pinna-
 cled, weather-fretted giant rock in a waste of
 waters, stands the ancient city of Chitore upon
 its hill. Its palaces are façadeless, worn and
 honeycombed with age ; its shrines are roofless
 skeleton buildings ; its towers are crumbling or
 worn to jagged pointed ruin, or broken into
piles of carved stone. To-day the city is
 deserted, but from its dignity of ruin you can
 re-construct with the mind's-eye its fortified
 glories when Padmani reigned there as India's
 queen of beauty at the end of the thirteenth
 century. Crowned with frowning battlement
 and high loopholed walls, the great rock city
 then dominated in the zenith of its power,
 as to-day it dominates in its majestic decay,
 the vast plain around. The sentinels paced
 the walls, keeping their ceaseless vigil. The
 Rajput horsemen were, ever armed and ready
 to go forth to battle. The banner of crimson
 centred with the golden sun floated proudly
 over the palace of the Rana. The excitement
 and glory of war's alarms ; the bray and blare
 of the summoning trumpet, the beat of the
 battle drum were almost daily incidents and
 sounds then in those chivalrous times.

"The blare of trumpets and the clash of spears
 Make pleasant music in a soldier's ears ;"

and the men of Chitore were all soldiers. To-
 day those glories are departed ; the old power
 is broken ; the old warrior caste scattered,

Chitore is deserted by the descendants of Bappa Rawul, and of its fate one might aptly quote those lines from Fitzgerald's translation of the "Rubaiyat" of Omar Khayyam.

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep :
And Bahrâm, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century all was life and chivalrous glory in Chitore. Then it was that the fame of Padmani's beauty reached Prince Ala-ud-din, nephew and successor of Sultan Jelal-ud-din, the Khilji chieftain and founder of the second or Khilji dynasty of the Turki Sultans of Delhi. The prince was a wayward man, lascivious, cruel and self-willed. No sooner had he heard of the princess whose beauty was the boast of all Rajputana than the loveliest of his harem women seemed dull and plain in his eyes. He resolved to march on Chitore and possess himself by force of this peerless Padmani. He collected a goodly army of horsemen and rode to Chitore. Rough and long was the way over mountains and through desert, morass and jungle. But the prince promised his men such spoil as ever excites to daring and endurance adventurer-soldiers. The fairest women of Rajputana and gold and jewels past calculation were to be theirs to enjoy, and it was a fierce and triumph-expectant army which rode up at last to the grimly defiant

walls of the rock fortress. The Turkis were surprised at the thickness of those walls. Chitore was too strong. Ala-ud-din's assaults were again and again thrown back till he saw that he could never win the lovely Padmani save by guile. So he ceased his attack ; and he sent into the city trusted envoys who were received by Prince Bheemsi with a Rajput's chivalrous welcome. They told him that their master had heard in Delhi of the wondrous beauty of the princess his wife, and that the most eager wish he had now in life was to see for himself this matchless face and form. It was, they said, the fierce reception with which the Muslim host had met at the hands of the city wall guards that had provoked assaults which Ala-ud-din regretted. He begged that he might not have to return to the imperial court, his pilgrimage of homage to such world-famous beauty futile. Finally he had bidden his messengers to make a proposal. It was not seemly or right, the cunning prince had instructed them to say, that he an alien and a man should gaze on Padmani ; but that his curiosity might be satisfied would Prince Bheemsi permit that he saw a reflection of the princess in a mirror ? Thus would his great wish be gratified and he would depart in all friendliness. And Prince Bheemsi, chivalrous and true as all Rajputs, a man himself of stainless honour, believed the wicked lies of Prince Ala-ud-din's envoys, and he returned

answer that he would allow him to see the reflection of his wife in a mirror. So the Muslim Prince entered the city with two or three of his men, and he was admitted into an inner chamber of the palace where he gazed upon the reflected form of Padmani. And when he had looked his fill, Prince Bheemsi did him the honour all Rajputs paid their guests. He accompanied him out of the city some way towards the Muslim camp. Now this courteous trustfulness was just what Ala-ud-din had anticipated, and upon it he had counted to carry out his mean plan. He had a band of his soldiers in waiting beyond the city limits, and, when he and Prince Bheemsi rode forth, the soldiers surrounded the Rajput prince and hurried him a captive to Ala-ud-din's camp. Then the latter, rejoicing at his mean triumph, sent an arrogant message into Chitore, saying that the Regent was his prisoner, and would remain such and be taken to Delhi unless the lovely Padmani were delivered up to him.

When this melancholy news reached Chitore a Council of State was held. After much debate, it was decided that Bheemsi, the wise ruler of the State and guardian of the Rana, must at all costs, even at that of his lovely wife, be redeemed from captivity. To this Padmani did not demur, for a Rajput woman knows well how to guard her honour and she would have hidden in her dress what would have ended the lust of Ala-ud-din for

all time. But Gorah, Padmani's uncle, was told of the decision and he bade them leave to him the carrying of it out. Meantime the answer which the envoy took back to Ala-ud-din was that Padmani would be sent to him in return for the liberation of the Regent.

And after a while the gates of Chitore opened to allow the exit of a procession of palanquins—seven hundred in all—bearing the Princess Padmani and her ladies-in-waiting. The litters were surrounded by trusty troops led by Gorah and his nephew Badul, a lad of twelve. Slowly the *cortège* moved across the plain towards the camp of Ala-ud-din. When he saw it coming, he rejoiced exceedingly in his meanness and falsehood, for he had no mind to keep his word but purposed to seize the princess and to hold the prince to further ransom till the people of Chitore surrendered the fortress itself. On reaching the camp, each palanquin was taken within a tent and set down. Gorah went to Ala-ud-din and begged that his niece might be allowed to see her husband alone. To this request Ala-ud-din agreed and Prince Bheemsi was allowed to pass within his wife's tent. After a while he left the tent and entered the palanquin in which Ala-ud-din believed that Padmani had been brought and was soon being quickly carried off to Chitore. Ala-ud-din, however, commanded that he should be stopped. Then there was a great clamour and uproar. In a moment the curtains of the

litters were parted and from within stepped seven hundred armed men, who instantly fell upon the Muslim camp.

Even the litter bearers proved to be soldiers in disguise. But the Muslim army was large and well drilled and a great fight raged around the tent of Ala-ud-din. Thick and fast fell the blows of the combatants; dire was the carnage, and the Rajputs killed three for every one of their band who fell. But they were overwhelmed at last by sheer force of numbers, and to a man laid down their lives for their state. Among those who were the first to die was Gorah, Padmani's uncle. In the meantime Bheemsi had leaped on to a horse and had reached Chitore. That night the flames glowed red in the sky from many funeral pyres whereon the widows of the fallen gave their loyal lives. As she mounted to her doom, the wife of Gorah saw the boy Badul who had escaped wounded from the strife, and she said : " Badul, did you see your uncle fight? Did he acquit himself well? " And the lad answered : " He was reaper of the harvest of battle. I followed his steps as the humble gleaner of his sword. On the bed of honour he spread a carpet of the slain. A barbarian prince his pillow, he laid him down, and he sleeps ringed about by his foes." And the distraught wife asked once again, as the flames sprang up and her clothes caught fire, " Badul, Badul, tell me again how my love bore

himself in the battle." And the boy replied :
*"How shall any tell of his deeds when he left
 no foe to dread or praise him."* And her face
 smiled through the flames at the brave lad and
 her eyes lighted with the joy of chaste love
 triumphant. "I go, Badul, to join my dear
 brave lord. Farewell."

Heavy was the loss to Mewar, for many of
 the bravest fighters of the state had fallen on
 that day. But Ala-ud-din had learned his
 grim lesson and in the night he and his army
 withdrew and returned to Delhi. Many
 years passed and Chitore was left unmolested.
 The boy Rana had long attained full age and
 was father of twelve sons ; while Bheemsi
 and Padmani still lived in happiness. Time,
 too, had brought many changes in Delhi.
 Ala-ud-din had succeeded as Sultan his uncle
 "Jelal-ud-din who was assassinated, some say, by
 order of his nephew. And the latter had be-
 come the cruellest of tyrants. He was rapa-
 cious and lascivious. No man's fortune and no
 man's home was secure against him. He bled
 the rich of their wealth, putting to death, tor-
 turing or imprisoning those who would resist
 him. Popularity among the crowd and the
 soldiery he gained by a lavish distribution of the
 wealth he extorted from his noble and rich sub-
 jects. Never was ruler more hated or feared,
 but his fortunes fared high. In war he was
 victorious, and his power was so great that all
 India seemed to tremble at his name. But his

hand lay heaviest on his own subjects. Among them none were safe who incurred his anger and he wreaked his vengeance on whole families. It is recorded by the chroniclers that "up to this time no hand had ever been laid upon wives or children on account of men's misdeeds." The Muslims were utterly cowed and disheartened; social life and festivities were at a stand-still. The Hindus, taxed almost to their last coin, were, as the chronicler relates, "so harassed and beaten that they had not even time to scratch their heads."

But in the midst of his life of victory and tyranny Ala-ud-din had never forgotten Chitore. He was induced to attack the fortress again as part of a plan to expel all Hindu rulers, "to close the road to Mooltan" against the Mongols, and to retrieve a tarnished name through a series of stirring campaigns. He extorted the uttermost amount in taxes he could wring from his downtrodden people; he had the wines in the palace cellars spilled in the roadway, and then he marched on Chitore.

Ala-ud-din recalled his long past abortive attempt upon the rock city; but he had now much military experience and a large and excellently equipped army, and he "sat down" to a long siege. As the chief point of attack he chose a position near the city's eastern gate where alone in the whole plain was there some slightly rising ground. Here he started to build up a mound which should command

the interior of the town. Tediously and continuously he worked on this mound, and it is recorded that while at first he paid a copper coin for a basketful of earth, he had to pay a gold piece for each basket at last, so scarce did earth become to raise the mighty mound. But it grew steadily, and as it rose the spirits of the defenders fell, for they saw that there was no hope for them and that no bravery would eventually prevail against the unending industry and the vast hordes of Ala-ud-din's host. And when the mound was completed, upon it were placed engines of war, huge catapults and slings and wooden cannon out of which were hurled stone and iron cannon balls breaking down wall and bastion and smashing into fragments towers and roofs of palaces and buildings.

One night as the Rana lay sleepless on his bed, mourning over the thought of the impending destruction of his city, he heard a voice saying : "I am hungry : I am hungry." And in the half light he saw a figure terrible and menacing and he knew that it was the guardian goddess of Chitore, Bhavani. Quickly he rose from his couch and, making obeisance, prayed to know her will. "What wouldst thou now, O Mother of terror and death ? Has not enough brave Rajput blood flowed to sate your thirst ?" "I will drink the blood of kings," replied the awful voice. "If Chitore is still to be my throne, then let twelve who wear the diadem die for the city."

The figure disappeared and the wretched Rana lay tossing distracted upon his bed till dawn. As soon as day had broken, he called together his nobles and councillors of State and told them of his vision. But they believed him to be the victim of a disordered imagination, of a mind preyed on by anxiety. When they told him that it was hard to believe that the goddess demanded so heavy a penalty, he bade them keep vigil with him and perchance Bhavani would return. So when night fell the Rana, surrounded by his nobles, waited, and in the midnight the goddess appeared to them and said : " I am hungry : I am hungry. Of what avail is it to me that the corpses of thousands of barbarians are strewn around my city ? I will have royal blood. Take twelve princes of the Rana's house, one by one. Place each on the throne, hold over his head the royal umbrella and wave before him the tail of the ox.* For three days let him be lord of Mewar. On the fourth let him meet the foe and his fate. If this is done, I may still dwell in Chitore." 16458

When the goddess had spoken the resolve was taken. If it might be that Chitore could thus be saved, they were Rajputs and they would not grudge the cost. In the morning the council of Chiefs was summoned

* The fly-whisk symbol of royalty.

and the Rana's twelve sons were there too. When they heard the command of the goddess, they showed no fear but contended among themselves as to who should be the first to die. The eldest of them claimed the privilege as his right ; and it was conceded to him. For three days he wore the diadem and ruled in Chitore. On the fourth he went out and fell fighting with dead Muslims all round him. The second son Ajeysi would have gone next in his turn, but he was dearest of all to the Rana. "Beloved son, go not forth," his father said. "Thou art very dear to me. Stay with me yet a little, and your brothers shall go first." And this was so. One by one the princes reigned for the three days as the goddess had commanded and then they faced the foe and were killed. And last it came to be Ajeysi's turn and he begged his father to let him go. But the Rana, calling together his councillors and nobles, addressed them thus : "If it be that yet another life may save Chitore, let me go who am the true diadem wearer and ruler. I will go in place of my son and, may be, if the goddess hearkens to our prayers the city may be saved and my son shall preserve our line." And his words were greeted with wild shouts of loving loyalty and the Chiefs, drawing their swords, cried : "We will go with you, our ruler. We will not let you die alone. Let us put on the saffron robe and the bridal coronet to honour the bride of death, and

let us die together." And the Rana answered :
 "Be it so ! Let us die together ; but our women must die too. *It will not be well that they wait till there is news of our death.*"

So to all the women the news of the desperate decision was broken, and the Rana bade Ajeysi fly from the city to Kailwarra, to the mountain-girt fortress, he and Hamir, son of Prince Ursi. This child the Rana loved and he bade his son bring up the boy as heir to the *gadi* in preference to Ajeysi's own two sons. This Ajeysi agreed to do if Hamir fulfilled the promise of his childhood. Then in the vaults beneath the palace were many funeral pyres built up. Faggots of wood and boughs and tree trunks and furniture from the houses and all the material available were collected and piled into hundreds of pyres deep in the gloom of the caverns which honeycomb the earth beneath the rock-city. The people worked hard piling the logs and baulks of timber and unhewn tree trunks till all was prepared. Then ghee and jars of oil were poured upon the pyres ; and, at the Rana's signal, the women of Chitore headed by the Rani and the once loveliest of India's womankind, Padmani, fearlessly bade husband and father and brother farewell and passed to their chaste deaths in the vaults. This is the awful rite of *johur* ; thus did the wives of Chitore uphold the nobility of Rajput womanhood and "pass as in a chariot of fire to the Heaven of Indra."

When the doors of the vault had closed upon the last, the Rana waited only to be certain that Ajeysi and little Hamir, with a chosen band of supporters, had made their escape to Kailwarra. Then he and his nobles opened the great gates of the city and rushed like a stream in flood, as flame over a field ripened dry for harvest, upon the foe. Out of the gate they charged, the flower of Rajput chivalry. Ten score or more of horsemen gathered round the Rana. They galloped upon the Muslim host, their eyes bloodshot with the lust of slaughter, their tongues lolling out, their fierce battle-cry rending the air, their *talwars* and falchions flashing like burnished silver in the sunshine. Such sight it was as might strike terror into the stoutest soldier's heart; and indeed the Muslim line gave and broke when the first impact of those opium-maddened horsemen was felt. Right through the Islamite vanguard they cut their way, lopping off heads, stabbing, hacking and unhorsing their enemies. But, brave as lions though they were, how could they prevail against such odds? Into the midst of the Muslim army they hewed their bloody road. Then, completely surrounded, they were attacked on all sides and fell to a man.

False the hopes, treacherous the promises that the goddess had held out. Chitore was lost and the Rana and his sons and nobles lay dead amid their countless Muslim victims.

Ala-ud-din's triumph was complete. With flags flying and drums beating he marched into the city. The gates stood wide open, but there were none to greet him or surrender the town. The streets and houses were empty. The people had fled: not a living soul was to be seen. Those who searched the Rana's palace came to where there curled and hung in a thick veil around the entrance to the vaults dense resinous smoke, tainted with the acrid pungent smell of burning flesh, ascending from a hundred hidden pyres. Ala-ud-din and his men stood aghast at the heroism of that sacrifice, for they realised that it was the awful rite of *johur*, that beneath their feet the women of Chitore were burning to death, preferring torture to their shameful love. From those dread caverns the bravest Muslim shrank back in terror. For those who ventured a few paces into the gloom there was the suffocating bitter smoke and the low distant moaning cries of the dying women. Never, Rajput legend tells, has any man, Rajput or alien, dared to enter those vaults since that dread day of sacrifice, except the Rana Hamir when he claimed from the witches of the lowest cavern the magic sword of Viswakarma. Around the vault has grown up a legend of terror. The darkness is believed to be filled with horrible forms, ghouls and vampires, and an immense serpent lies in endless coils guarding the passage way.

RANA HAMIR.

SOME years before the Sultan Ala-ud-din Khilji entered the desolate city of Chitore a conqueror, Prince Ursi, the eldest son of Rana Lakumsi, one day went hunting in the forest of Ondwa. With his band of huntsmen and attendants the young prince, javelin in hand, rode after a fierce old wild boar of great size, which broke from his covert in the thick undergrowth and went crashing angrily through the wood. Long and tiring was the chase, till they came to the confines of the forest. Then the tusker found a refuge in a field of maize standing many feet high. Guarding the ripening corn from the ever-hungry birds which fluttered and circled around was a jungle girl squatting on a rough structure of bamboo. Seeing the huntsmen the girl made haste to come down and boldly, yet not immodestly, approached the prince. A daughter of the wild, her worn red cotton *sari* but scantily covered a figure of rare beauty and symmetry. Still scarcely more than a child, her strong supple limbs, her bosom filling to the soft full curves of womanhood, the glow of health on the satin skin and the unaffected grace of her movements made her a goodly sight to look on. The young prince thought he had never seen such charming artless beauty. "Maharaj," she asked simply in a sweet low

voice, "the boar will turn to bay. Shall I drive him out for you?" Prince Ursi laughingly told the girl to try, not thinking that anyone so fair and young would have the courage to face the enraged animal. But, seizing one of the tallest of the maize stalks and uprooting it, she cut the end to a spear point with her jungle knife. Then, returning to her *machan*, she boldly pushed her way through the dense corn stalks, disappearing entirely. The prince and his suite had watched her with surprise, but this turned to amazement when, after a little while, the girl reappeared dragging after her the dead boar stabbed to the heart with the maize stalk.

Far from being angry with her for her audacity in depriving him of his prey, the prince welcomed her with warm words of praise for her daring and skill. She modestly cast down her eyes before the gaze of the ardent young man, for his eyes had lighted with feelings other than those of ordinary gratitude to a peasant for a service rendered. The flame of longing was lighted in him for the radiant buxom rustic beauty, a flame fed by the day's further events. The girl went back to her watching; and the prince and his attendants rested and eat beneath the trees that shadowed a rivulet bordering the maize field. Presently a clay pellet struck the prince's horse with such force that its leg was broken. It was the girl who was throwing balls of clay

from her sling at the greedy birds. When she saw the horse fall, she ran fearlessly to the prince and begged him in graceful but not humble words to forgive her for so unfortunate an accident. Once more the spell of her wild animal beauty fell on him. He felt no anger at the incident, but only a keen delight in seeing her, in having her close to him again. In her speech and in her attitude and bearing there was a combination of maidenly shyness and womanly modesty with a grave dignity and self-possession. The prince thought she looked lovelier than ever as she smiled at him when he told her not to be distressed, that he could not be angry with one so sweet as she. Then the party hunted anew, but the prince did not wander very far from the maize field. Thither he contrived to return at sunset when he knew that she too would be going homeward. At the edge of the forest they met her. She had herded her cattle and goats. On her head was balanced a chatty of milk and two kids frisked by her side led by strings. One of the prince's retainers in a spirit of pure devilment tried to frighten her into spilling the milk or losing hold of the strings by spurring his horse and making it prance and rear. But the girl saw what was in his mind and adroitly made one of the kids run as if between the legs of the horse, which, frightened, swerved and fell, bringing its rider down in a rare tumble.

The prince admired her more than ever when he saw her triumphantly walk on, the chatty poised firmly on her shapely head and the kids' strings still in her hands. He was glad that his follower had been so smartly punished for his trick, and he called the girl to him. To his question where she lived, she replied : " I live with my father, Maharaj ; he is a Rajput of the Chundano tribe. We are very poor."

"Tell him to come to see me to-morrow," said the prince gently. As he spoke, he looked full in to the girl's eyes and she saw that he loved her. And on the morrow the old Rajput appeared at the palace and was at once ushered into the presence of the young prince. But he made no low bows nor stood with clasped hands, his head bent reverentially. He greeted the prince with grave courtesy ; and then, to the amazement of the courtiers, he sat down beside him and spoke with him as if he, too, were a prince. Ursi did not seem to resent this conduct. He was very polite to the old fellow and at last asked him to give him his daughter in marriage. But the old man at once refused. His daughter was dear to him ; he was proud of her goodness and beauty ; but he had never thought of so great a match and he believed that it would not be for his child's ultimate happiness. Ursi pleaded ardently, for the girl's beauty had enthralled him and he longed to make her his

own. But it was all in vain. Yet he so admired the proud old Rajput's dignity and unworldly concern for his child's happiness that he had no wish to take by force, as a prince might, her for whom he longed so. He had seen the light of love in the girl's eyes in response to his look. Thus he did not despair ; but, expressing again his tender regard for the sweet maid, he dismissed the old man with much politeness.

When the old Rajput got home and related to his wife what had occurred at the palace, she was very angry with him. Womanlike, she only saw a great future for her daughter. It was simply ridiculous, she said, to allow scruples and doubts as to the amount of unalloyed happiness ahead of the child to deprive her of such a chance. Let the prince have her, since he was clearly in love with her and would honourably wed her. So the next day the old fellow made another journey to the palace and told the ardent young prince what had happened, and that he now agreed with his wife and the marriage could take place. So Prince Ursi had his heart's desire, and to him in due course and ceremony came a bride as fair as ever tremblingly happy lover unveiled. His highest hopes of joy were realised in her tender arms, and in the fulness of time their happiness was completed by the birth of a son whom they called Hamir.

When Ala-ud-din sacked Chitore Hamir was quite a child. Rana Lakumsi prevented his

favourite son Ajeysi from giving his life before the doomed city with his brothers. He bade him take away and guard Hamir and bring him up to succeed himself as ruler of Mewar. All this Ajeysi had promised. After the defeat by the Muslim hosts and the awful *johur* in the palace vaults, when he fled with the remnant of the people, he took little Hamir to his new home, the mountain fortress of Kailwarra. There they hid during those awful days of slaughter and rapine, when Ala-ud-din sated his thirst for revenge by plunder and destruction. Chitore's splendid buildings he razed to the ground ; only one he spared, the palace of Bheemsi and Padmani. Over the city he placed a Hindu Governor, Maldeo. Long were the days of suffering and desolation before the Muslim hosts returned to Delhi, their lust of battle sated.

The life that the exiled Rana led in Kailwarra was one that afforded excellent training for so high-spirited a boy as little Hamir soon proved himself to be. His earliest training was in feats of arms ; and the years of boyhood were passed in a series of petty wars with the Muslim soldiers whom the Sultan had left in the country and with bands of brigand chieftains whom the disturbed times encouraged to pillage. These men were really subjects of the Rana, but now in his misfortunes they threw off their allegiance and defied his authority. Hamir grew to be a comely and brave lad.

When he reached early manhood, he had a chance of showing how well he deserved to be chosen by his grandfather to succeed Ajeysi in preference to the claims of the latter's own two sons. One rebellious Chief actually marched against Kailwarra ; and in the ensuing battle he wounded the Rana in the head with a lance. Ajeysi was not seriously hurt, but the rebel's affront to him had to be punished. He called on his sons to take vengeance on Moonja, as the Chief was called. They hesitated ; but Hamir, being asked, replied proudly, " If I succeed, expect me in a few days ; if I fail, you will never see me again."

He started off at once and was absent for some days. Then one evening he rode in triumph into the city gates with Moonja's bloody head hanging from his saddle-bow. Riding to the palace, he laid the grim trophy at his uncle's feet. Ajeysi took him into his arms ; and then he said : " Surely, it is written on thy brow that thou shalt be lord of Mewar." Dipping his finger into the still bleeding neck of the rebel, he made with the blood the *teeka*—the mark of sovereignty—on Hamir's forehead. Thus the youth formally became heir to the *gadi*. Of his cousins one died at Kailwarra and the other left his home never to return. It was but an empty title for which he had then to contend with Hamir. But his desertion of his home and rights

worked ill at last for Mewar. From him descended "the Mountain Rat" Sivaji, who broke the power of the Muslims, establishing that Mahratta predominance which at last wrought the ruin of Rajasthan.

On Ajeysi's death Hamir became Rana of Mewar. He set himself at once the task of harrying the Sultan's garrisons and co-ordinating the guerilla warfare which had been waged perpetually since the sack of Chitore. In this struggle against Ala-ud-din there had hitherto been no system. Hamir regularised it and called into the Kailwarra district, and under his immediate protection, all his uncle's adherents. Soon his powers of organisation told and his daring bands drove the imperial troops behind their fortifications. At his will he descended from his mountain fastness and laid waste the land. All pursuit was as good as futile in such difficult country. He defied capture and the prestige of the imperial viceroy was seriously diminished.

When matters had reached this pass and his fame was great throughout the country, he received a message from Maldeo, the Governor of Chitore, offering him his daughter in marriage. Hamir's followers believed it a trick and advised him to ignore the cunning ruse. But he knew no fear. To recover Chitore was his ambition and, even if the marriage were not celebrated and the offer a mockery, he felt he would like once more to tread the stones

of his grandfather's city. So with a small band of trusty men-at-arms he rode into the plain and halted before the hill-fortress. But there was none to greet him, and, as he approached the gates of Maldeo's palace, he began to think himself indeed duped. By Rajput custom the bridegroom should be welcomed by a bevy of girls—the bride's maids. Outside the bride's house the emblem of marriage, the triangle, is hung; and the lover must break this with his lance if he can, while he is jeered and pelted with sweets and flowers by the laughing girls. But over the palace gates no triangle hung; there were no roguish faces to smile tantalisingly at him; no air of rejoicing in the town, no crowd of beggars at the palace gates expectant of largesse and food, no Brahmins to bless the happy pair. Hamir checked the angry murmurs among his men and, leaping from his horse, walked into the hall. There, too, there was silence and gloom ill-befitting the occasion. Maldeo was there with his family, and gravely he greeted his guest as son-in-law elect. There and then without delay the bride was fetched closely veiled, and Hamir was married to her by a Brahmin, the only rite being the tying of his scarf to the girl's veil. Thereafter Maldeo and all withdrew leaving Hamir, as is the custom, alone with his bride. The veiled figure was his, but what had he won? He feared that he would find that he

had been tricked into marriage with some withered hag. Laying hold of the veil, he raised it and looked into the face of a young girl. She was comely ; but her beauty and gentleness were marred by the fear and grief which the timid eyes and shrinking form expressed. Hamir looked long at the fair but terrified face. In his bride's eyes he saw no instant hatred of him. Indeed she looked kindly, almost pityingly at him. Then he asked : " What does this all mean ? Why have I been so received and so married, and why do you tremble so and look so sad ? "

" My Lord, I am sad because thou hast been foully tricked and shamed ; thy servant is a widow." Thus had Maldeo cunningly contrived to affront and bring unspeakable shame upon his enemy. For a Rajput to marry a widow, whose very name is thought to bring a curse with it, was an unutterable disgrace. Every chaste Rajput widow had to die, on her husband's funeral pyre ; or, if she survived, it was but to live as an outcaste, shaving her head, wearing no jewels, only a single garment and devoting herself to penance and prayer. The shrinking girl half expected Hamir to strike her dead as she confessed to him the fearful truth. But, horror-struck as he was, he looked not unkindly at her. So she found courage to tell him how when an infant in arms she had been wedded to a boy whom she had never seen save when she was so

young that she could not remember what he was like. He had died in battle while she was quite a child. She made her confession with such a depth of feeling for the husband so cruelly duped that Hamir's heart warmed towards her. She saw the kindness in his eyes and of a sudden she knelt and, seizing his hand, pressed it and kissed it and asked him to forgive her. Hamir, overcome with the shame he had suffered, heeded not the frightened girl till she burst out, "Lord, grieve not so. For this great wrong I will atone to you. I will help you to take revenge for to-day. If you will bear with me, I will yet help you to win back the heritage of your family. Listen to me and you shall yet reign in Chitore."

The girl spoke with such a passion of devotion that Hamir was startled into attention and admiration. He took her hand and soothed her with gentle words and then bade her unfold her plans. Nothing, she said, could be done at once. They must wait and scheme for their vengeance; but it would come. Meanwhile she begged her husband who, according to custom, had the right to some one gift besides the dowry, to ask for no lands, jewels or slaves but for Maldeo's councillor, Jal the Mehta. "My father will not wish to give him but he must grant you one desire. Jal will aid me in my plan." So Hamir went back to his father-in-law and courteously saluted him and his, showing no indignation at the trick played

on him. Great was the surprise of his assembled enemies at his composure and great, too, their wonder when he asked for Jal the Mehta. Then he and his men took the Rani and Jal back to Kailwarra.

Two years passed and a son had been born to Hamir. He had almost forgotten his shame in the love he bore towards his faithful queen. With Jal's help she had kept closely in touch with life within Chitore, and she knew there were those there on whom she could count at the moment of crisis. When the baby was a year old, she sent to her father begging that she might come to Chitore to lay the child upon the shrine of her family's god. She had subtly chosen a time when she knew that her father and many men-at-arms were gone to fight a neighbouring state. Her half-brother did not hesitate to grant so reasonable a request, and with the faithful Jal and a goodly troop of Hamir's warriors, she was welcomed in Chitore. The rest was comparatively easy, so cleverly at her bidding had Jal undermined the loyalty of Maldeo's followers. Once among them she made her strong personality felt. When Hamir, in accordance with the arrangement made between them, appeared in force before the city and demanded its surrender, few there were who sought to oppose her when she ordered that the gates be thrown open to her husband. When Maldeo and his army returned, there floated the Rana's banner—the

golden sun centred in crimson—from the battlements. In the first assaults Maldeo was repulsed, and the news that the Rana Hamir had claimed the heritage of his fathers' brought many a stout warrior to his flag. With a much-reinforced army he sallied forth and defeated Maldeo, one of whose sons he himself killed. Another deserted to Hamir and conquered part of Mewar for him. The death of the Sultan Ala-ud-din had been the signal for revolutions at Delhi and there was no central power strong enough to cope with Hamir's advancing troops. Thus ample time was given him to consolidate his kingdom.

He set to work to rebuild Chitore. Of its former glories few had survived the ruthless devastation wrought by Ala-ud-din's orders. Palaces and buildings had been destroyed. Jewels and gold had been looted and squandered. But these losses could be retrieved and Hamir had seized vast booty in the coffers and palaces of Maldeo. One treasure of his family, however, Hamir sought in vain, namely, the two-edged sword forged by Viswakarma with which Siva's terrible spouse, Bhavani, had invested Bappa Rayul, the Rana's ancestor. There was no trace of this divinely forged weapon. But Hamir did not give up hope. He felt sure that the sword must have been protected by the goddess from desecration at the hands of the Muslims. Every building, every treasure house, each secret chamber was searched but in

vain. This very failure made Hamir the more certain that the magic blade had been protected by the goddess, and he offered prayers daily that it might be revealed to him where the sword was hidden. And, as he prayed at the shrine of Charuni Devi on the holy Tiger's Mount, the voice of the goddess spoke to him in a vision. She told him that the sword was in the lowest of the palace vaults, guarded by witches and evil spirits and that he could only gain it by venturing there alone.

Into those gruesome chambers, tunnelled beneath the rock city, when the earth was still unpeopled by the present human race, no man had dared to set foot since that day of woe when the women of Chitore fulfilled the last duty of chastity and died there on a hundred pyres. The reek and the stench of burning human flesh clung still in foul fumes around the dank rock walls. The darkness was impenetrable. No crevice, no passage or outlet gave chance to the sunlight to sift into that awful gloom. Hamir descended the rough rock steps down which so long ago the small soft feet of the faithful women had trod their pilgrimage to the flame. Then he plunged into the gloom. The air of the cavern was fetid and damp with the dampness of the charnel house. He could not see where his feet rested as he stumbled on over the broken ground, moist and boggy in places, polished rock surface in others. Out of the

gloom there came strange forms which flapped wings menacingly about him. Bats and vampires there were, and others of human shape it seemed as he stretched out his hands to guard himself. Soft slimy creatures crawled on the floor, their eyes points of crimson or green light in the blackness. So fearful was his path that Hamir's heart beat fast. His resolution all but failed him as he descended deeper and deeper, slipping, sliding, stumbling, seeing neither the ground beneath his feet nor the way before him. Then in the distance there was a glimmer of yellow light, an unholy gleam—such light as never was on earth or sea. He pressed on, and the air got denser and fouler with the smoke, resinous, oily, viscid, that still hung in fumes as reeking and nauseating as when it was belched fresh from the scores of burning corpses. Then the passage he followed opened of a sudden into a vast cavern high-roofed with polished rock floor. Here he discovered that the light gleamed from torches held in the hands of three loathsome figures, half women half squirming reptiles. These foul forms, their lank and tangled hair knotted with writhing serpents, their withered breasts hanging foul and blotchy against the protruding ribs, crouched like hungry tigers over cauldrons which hissed and bubbled above fires glowing yellow as the torches they held. The light seemed to Hamir almost more terrible than the darkness; but, steadying himself in the sudden hideous radiance, he

walked towards the witches. Angrily they glared at him, and one spake : " What seekest thou ? Who art thou that thou darest to trespass here ? " And Hamir, undaunted, returned the menacing gaze and said proudly : " I am Hamir, heir of Bappa Rawul, lord of Mewar and Chitore. I come here at the bidding of the goddess to claim my family treasure, the sword of Viswakarma. " Then there arose a chorus of hellish laughter. Swaying backwards and forwards before their cauldrons the three sisters shook with their unholy glee. " Thou art bold, O man. Art thou bold enough to share our feast ? Only so canst thou win the magic blade. " And she motioned him to approach the steaming pot and to uncover it. This Hamir did and within he saw what made him flinch with terror and disgust. In the foul broth there floated gobbets of putrid flesh, remnants of his mother and the women of his house. The jeering witch held out a bowl and motioned him to eat. Hâmir ladled out the noxious stew and filled the bowl. Every shred and gobbet of the reeking putrified flesh he ate ; and then he stood up fearless but giddy with horror. " Thou indeed art a man worthy of thy royal house, " chorussed the three hags. From a crevice in the cave wall they drew a gold and jewel-studded box of iron, out of which they took the gleaming sword of Viswakarma. " Here is what thou hast sought. Come no more hither, mortal. " And Hamir, holding

the heavy weapon easily in his strong hand, made his way back through the reeking gloom into the palace hall of Chitore.

RANA KUMBHO.

RANA MOKUL, son of Rana Lakha by the Princess Hansa, through the generosity of his elder half-brother Prince Chonda, had become heir to the *gadi* of Mewar. He was fated to be killed in the prime of life in revenge for an insult he had not intended to offer. He had profited by the kindly and wise guardianship of Prince Chonda and he made a good ruler, gaining the love of his subjects by his justice and mercy. He married and had a son, Kumbho; and, while the latter was still a youth, his father's life ended in the following tragic manner.

Rana Kaitsi, Mokul's grandfather, had among his women a beautiful girl of lowly birth, who bore him two sons, Chacha and Maira. Her father was only a carpenter and the Rana could not contract a legal marriage with her. But he loved her much and he promoted her children to places of honour at court. His favour towards them earned them much jealousy among the courtiers who hated to see the two honoured beyond their rank "below the nobles of the second class." When their father died, Chacha and Maira were maintained in their posts of honour at the court of Mokul. He showed them affection and treated them always as if they had been

his legitimate uncles. But their position at court was doubtful ; and the two brothers were very sensitive about their lowly birth. They endeavoured to compensate for it by proud and arrogant manners,—a mistake made by many upstarts and one which gained them naturally more hatred than ever.

One day Rana Mokul had ridden from Chitore to punish a band of brigands who had been harassing his subjects. As he rested for a meal in the forest, he saw a tree that was strange to him and asked one of his nobles its name. This man, who deeply resented the favour shown to Chacha and Maira, seeing a chance of making them ridiculous before the whole court, advised the king to ask them. Mokul, never realising how the question could be twisted into a reference to their grandfather's trade, asked innocently enough : " Uncle, what is the name of that tree ? " The brothers were very angry at this, for they believed that the Rana had intended to insult them. Though they said nothing then, they took counsel together within a few hours and determined to kill their nephew. That very night as the Rana knelt at his prayers, his uncles broke into his chamber and murdered him with swords. Thereafter they mounted their horses and galloped for Chitore, hoping to surprise the city. But, though the warders knew not what had happened, they would not open the gates at night for the two fugitives who rode off

forthwith, knowing that with the dawn would come the news of their crime.

When it was known that Mokul had been butchered by the two brothers, there was great anger and sorrow in Chitore, for the Rana had been much liked. The new Rana, Prince Kumbho, young as he was, showed the prudence, resolution and resource which were to make his reign remarkable. Having summoned his counsellors, he sent to Joda, Rao of Marwar, begging him to come to his aid with a body of troops. The Rao had been ever friendly since the day when Prince Chouda and he resolved that there should be peace between their Houses, and he sent at once mounted troops under the command of his son. Thus reinforced, Rana Kumbho started out in pursuit of his father's murderers. They had gathered some clansmen and freebooters and, having reached the mountains, had made their headquarters at a fortress known as Ratakote, not far from the site of the present Udaipur. This stronghold, naturally almost inaccessible, they fortified further and believed it safe against any siege operations which the two princes could undertake. The progress of the avenging army was slow and difficult, and the task of reducing Ratakote promised to be tedious, if not actually impossible. But good fortune befell the princes in the shape of an encounter with a peasant who, on seeing them, prostrated himself and begged that they would

hear his story. The princes reined in their horses and commanded the man to speak. "O Protectors of the poor" he said, "hearken to a dishonoured father's story. Yonder at Ratakote are freebooters who call themselves princes. They are cruel and rapacious and have become the terror of the countryside. No man's home is secure; no man's wife or daughter is safe. A few days back their band of robbers visited our village and seized my daughter, who is fair to look on, and they carried her off to their chiefs. Even now I am going to Ratakote to endeavour to rescue her; or, if not, to wipe out my shame in the blood of the miscreant thieves. For I am a Rajput of the Chohan clan; Soojah is my name and my dishonour verily is intolerable."

When the princes had heard his story, they bade him be of good cheer. They told him that their army was going to destroy Ratakote and its robber rulers; and they asked him to come with them as guide. Soojah, who knew the passes well and who had worked on the building of the walls of the fortress, gave them cheering news. Steep as was the hill and perilous as was the foothold at times, Ratakote could be surprised: of that he was certain. He would show them the place where the ascent could be made most easily.

So Soojah was the army's guide and by the time night fell the troops had reached Ratakote. Then Soojah led the way up the

mountain. In the darkness and keeping complete silence, the warriors scrambled by rocky ledge and gnarled root, cutting a precarious foothold with their knives or supporting themselves on the precipitous pathway by grasping at tree trunks or tufts of fern and grass. Their progress was aided by the weather, for there was no moon and before they had climbed half way the rain and thunder came. It was so fierce a storm that, however alert had been the watchers on the walls, they would not have heard the approaching foe. After an hour or more of steady climb they had mustered in force just below the walls which were not formidable, as the holders of the fort trusted most to the steepness of the mountain. Silently the princes and Soojah led the men over the ramparts. When all had scrambled over, they surprised the wall guard on that side, cutting him down before he could give the alarm. Within the fort all were sleeping and when the alarm was given Chacha and Maira, sword in hand, tried in vain to rally their men. In the courtyard a desperate struggle ensued, lighted only by the vivid flashes of lightning and the yellow flare of the torches of the fortress watchmen. Before the defenders could collect and make an attack in any order they were cut down in twos and threes, as they hurried up from all quarters, by Kumbho's men who rushed through the buildings slaughtering all they met. The Rao's

son slew Maira, while Soojah, who fought his way like a man-eating tiger through the throng around Chacha, reached him at last and clove his skull in two with a mighty blow of his *talwar*, shouting his dishonoured daughter's name the while. The fight was soon over. The courts and alley ways ran with blood : not one freebooter lived to tell the tale of that fearful night. Their hacked and dismembered bodies were hurled over the ramparts and rolled and bounded down the hill-side, bumping from rock to rock, to be picked to glistening white bone on the morrow by the vultures.

Rana Kumbho, having thus avenged his father's death, returned to Chitore and began his reign. His rule was wise and just, and he worked to strengthen the state. It was a very favourable time for the advancement of the interests of Chitore and for the extension of its boundaries. The menace of Delhi was for the time removed. The third dynasty of the Delhi Sultanatē, the House of Tughlak, founded by Ghiyās-ud-din Tughlak, Governor of the Panjab, the son of a Turkoman slave by a Jat mother, had lost its power. Two of the Tughlak Sultans, Muhammad "The Mad" and Firoz had been strong rulers. Their successors were weak. The fierce ambitions and disciplined strength of Ala-ud-din Khilji, the bigoted tyranny of Muhammad and the benevolent firmness of Firoz were replaced by feebleness and corruption. The later

Tughlaks were under the influence of worthless favourites. The natural result of this was the entire disorganisation of the Delhi Empire. Provincial governors revolted in all directions. Some were strong enough to declare and maintain their independence. This was the period, too, during which Timur The Tartar swept down upon Delhi in a whirlwind of terror and slaughter, crippling and looting the Empire. He re-crossed the Indus in March 1399, leaving behind him desolation as complete as a prairie fire's seared track. The conquests of Ala-ud-din were nearly all lost to the Muslims. At Jaunpur the dynasty known as "the Kings of the East" wrested from the imperial authorities the territory which later formed the kingdom of Oudh. The viceroy of Gujarat, Muzaffar Khan, threw off the yoke of Delhi. The Deccan had again become independent. Malwa, once a Hindu kingdom, and conquered for the Delhi Sultanate by Ala-ud-din, had become independent under its Muslim viceroy who flouted the imperial demands for tribute.

This man was ambitious and sought to build his fortunes on the wreck of the Empire. With this object he led armies against his neighbours, invading and defeating the Jaunpur and the Bahmani Deccan kingdoms, some of the territories of which he annexed. Ajmere, "the key of Rajasthan," he captured and, reinforced by troops from Gujarat under their ruler, he marched on Mewar. The Rana

Kumbho gathered his forces to the number of 100,000 horse and foot and 1,400 elephants and gave battle to the two kings. His victory was complete. The king of Malwa was taken prisoner; his forces were scattered and his power was gone. But Kumbho was magnanimous and merciful. The king was removed to Chitore, but during the six months of his captivity he was treated hospitably and kindly. Finally the Rana liberated him, not only demanding no ransom but loading him with gifts. The king's crown only did he retain in the treasury of Chitore, destined to be the spoil of a more renowned victor. The king of Malwa showed his gratitude for his magnanimous treatment by allying himself with his captor and leading his troops with those of Mewar against the imperial army which was entirely routed.

The victory of Kumbho over Malwa is marked by the Tower of Victory which he erected in Chitore. It took ten years to build, is 122 feet high, and each of its faces is 35 feet broad at the base and more than 17 feet at the summit. This tower is of limestone and quartz, polished like marble. It is divided into nine storeys with windows on the four faces of each storey. Around the domed chamber at the top are black marble slabs once inscribed with the genealogy of the Ranas of Chitore. The whole tower is a miracle of intricate carving, its entire surface a medley of sacred and mythological figures, the beasts and birds and

fishes of Hindu myth, fantastic and elaborate past all description. A monument of carvers' industry, this wonderful structure stands to-day amid the ruin of the Rajput city, "the ringlet on the brow of Chitore." Defiant of time's ravages, in its glistening glory, it is to be seen for miles "sparkling like the rays of the rising sun, rising like the bridegroom of the land. Verily a Pillar of Victory over time, it is almost as it was when "in the midst of the armies of his foe Kumbho was as a tiger or as a flame in a dry forest."

Kumbho was indeed a great builder. He reared temples to Krishna and Brahma in Chitore in memory of his father; and on Mount Abu he built another great shrine. Forts, too, he established all over his dominions and he strengthened those that existed. Chief of his citadels was Komulmer, "the hill of Kumbho," afterwards famous as the home of his grandson, Prithi Raj. Besides these activities he was of a literary turn of mind and wrote poetry and hymns in honour of Krishna. In this taste he had the sympathy of his chief wife Meera Bai, who also wrote verse and built a temple to Krishna at Chitore. She spent much of her time in pilgrimages to his shrines all over India, and she created some scandal by dancing before his altars as if she were a temple girl. There was scandal talked in ancient India as in modern days, and Queen Meera Bai was accused of infidelities, to indulge in which

she made, it was alleged, her lengthy journeys all over India. But legend relates that so dear was she to the God that, when her hour of destiny arrived, it was Krishna himself who drew her life from her lips in a divine lover's kiss.

Kumbho was a just and strong ruler and the country flourished under him. But late in his life he did what was against the interests of the state as well as against the code of honour and the dictates of friendship, for it renewed the age-old hostility between Mewar and Marwar. His desires were aroused by the beauty of the daughter of the chief of Jhalawar, who was the betrothed of one of the princes of the House of Marwar. In his reckless passion he forcibly abducted the girl, took her to his fortress of Komulmer and compelled her to marry him. Though the unfortunate girl had to submit to his embraces, she was at no pains to hide her hatred for him and her devotion to her affianced husband. Legend tells that nightly she lit a lamp in the tower of her palace prison to show her lover at Mundore that she only awaited rescue to throw herself into his arms. It is told how he made effort after effort to reach her, but ever in vain.

Kumbho, though usually just, could be harsh and unreasonable, as, for instance, in the banishment of his eldest son Raimul. The Rana had the custom of waving his sword

thrice round his head and muttering some prayer or charm each time he sat down. This piqued the curiosity of his son who one day asked him why he did this. As a punishment for his impertinence he was banished from Chitore. While Raimul was thus in exile, Kumbho was stabbed by a minstrel, who had been hired, so tradition has it, by one of the Rana's sons to commit the crime. This murder was committed in the fiftieth year of his reign. The parricide prince seized the throne and reigned for five years. Surrounded by enemies and jealous neighbours, he was only able to maintain his position by wholesale cessions of territory. Thus misgoverned and weakened, Chitore was a tempting prize for the rightful heir Raimul who gathered a considerable army and marched on the city. In a pitched battle the parricide usurper was utterly routed and fled to Delhi, where in return for the protection and assistance of the first of the Lodi sultans, Buhlol, he offered to accept him as his suzerain and to give him his daughter in marriage. As he left the presence of the sultan who had agreed to the bargain, the recreant Rajput was struck dead by lightning. In Rajput royal records this prince is always nameless, being entered on the list after Kumbho as "Hatiaro" (the murderer). His was an ill reign and Mewar rejoiced in the return of Raimul.

PRITHI RAJ.

OF the three sons of Rana Raimul the eldest, Sanga, was the most prudent and wise ; Prithi Raj was the most recklessly brave and adventurous ; and the youngest, Jaimal, was the most cunning and self-seeking. The Rana loved his heir dearly ; but Prithi Raj was the object of popular admiration by reason of his dare-devil courage in battle and the chase. From his earliest youth he had shown no fear of man or beast, and it was natural that he should regard his elder brother with some jealousy and chafe against the fate that made him the younger son. In his recklessness and pride he did not hesitate to speak his thoughts in any company and to rail against his fate, declaring that he was the fittest of the Rana's sons to lead the Rajput chivalry against the Muslims. Often he had complained thus when one day Sahga overheard him speaking so and said kindly : " Brother, true it is that you are the bravest of us three and fittest to lead the Rajputs. I should not grudge you the leadership if it be for the good of the State. I am the eldest and rightful heir, truly ; but I am willing to put our destinies to a test. Let us go to consult the priestess of Charuni-Devi. If it be that she says that you shall rule, I will ask our father to permit me to forswear my rights and to make you his heir."

And Prithi Raj, greedy of power, rejoiced at his brother's generosity and replied : " Let, us go, brother." There were with them as they talked their uncle, Soorajmul, and their brother Jaimal; and the four of them started out to ride to Tiger's Mount. When they reached the Shrine, the priestess was away. Entering her chamber, Sanga threw himself down on the floor upon a panther's skin and Soorajmul sat beside him with one knee on the skin; while Prithi Raj and Jaimal sat on the couch. Presently the priestess returned and Prithi Raj at once explained why they were there. Turning to Sanga, the holy woman said : " You sit upon the seat of kings, the panther's skin. Surely shall you rule over Mewar. And you," she went on, addressing Soorajmul, " You shall have power and be a chieftain after exile, danger and sorrow. There shall you rule where you shall see a mother defending her young."

When Prithi Raj heard these words, he was seized with a paroxysm of rage and, drawing his sword, he rushed at Sanga to kill him. Jaimal, too, would have slain his elder brother, but Soorajmul, sword in hand, interposed, while Prithi Raj and Sanga fought desperately and the terrified priestess fled from the cell. The fight was fierce and long, but at last Prithi Raj lay exhausted and Soorajmul was down. From the final onslaught of Jaimal Sanga escaped bleeding from many sword cuts

and blinded in one eye. Riding hard he came to a sanctuary beside the door of which stood the Rahtore Beeda of the Ondawut clan with his horse ready saddled and bridled for a journey. Almost falling from his horse in exhaustion, he told the Rahtore his story, pointing to where across the plain galloped Jaimal and his servants intent upon slaying him. Bidding him rest a few moments in the sanctuary and then mount his fresh horse, the Rahtore, drawing his sword, prepared to fight Jaimal. When the young prince arrived, he demanded his brother. "He is my guest," replied the Rahtore. "Then we will seek him out," angrily retorted Jaimal. "Nay, nay, you cannot enter here;" and the Rahtore, as he spoke, barred the way. For a few moments there was a desperate fight. Then the brave Rahtore, overwhelmed by the number of his foes, fell pierced with three swords, and over his body the prince and his men rushed into the sanctuary. But Sanga had by this time leaped on the Rahtore's horse and was dashing off at full gallop.

When the Rana heard of the fight between the brothers, he was very angry and he sent for Prithi Raj and banished him from court. "Thou art brave and chivalrous and a true Rajput on the battlefield; but what is this that thou hast done, seeking to kill thy brother? Ill must follow such wickedness. By thy murderous sword thou hast driven Sanga into exile.

Go thou now, too. Let my palace be rid of thee. Spend thy days in fighting, since thou lovest it so." So when he had recovered from his wounds, Prithi Raj left Chitore. His father was right ; he loved fighting so much that he was happy in the prospect of a life of warlike adventure, freed of all court restraint. Taking but five followers, each one of whom adored him and would have gladly given his life for him, the reckless prince, well armed and mounted, rode off in search of conquests. First he turned his attention to the territory of Godwar. This had long been part of Mewar, but during the reign of "the murderer" (Hatiaro) it had revolted and the Meenas, from whom a former Rana had taken it, declared their independence. The Rana Raimul had vainly tried to regain it. Prithi Raj resolved to attack this district. Its Chief at this time was a weak ruler and the country was at the mercy of brigands and freebooters. It would be something achieved, Prithi Raj thought, if he could expel its present possessor and restore it to Mewar.

So he rode to Godwar. But the journey was long and food was scarce. When he and his retainers reached the city friendless and hungry, he recollected a merchant of the town, one Ojah from whom he had bought a diamond ring a year or so before. He would possibly assist him. So he rode to Ojah's house, and the merchant welcomed the

young prince. Prithi Raj told the man all that had happened and how his father had hidden him go and fight. Now he wished to regain Godwar for the Rana and restore order there. And Ojah gave him news of the town and how ill the Meena ruled, and counselled him how to overthrow the Chief. First, acting on his advice, Prithi Raj went to the palace and there he and his men offered their services as soldiers to the Meena. Such sturdy looking warriors were welcome enough and for a while they did good work against the robber bands with the Chief's troops. But Prithi Raj only awaited his chance, and it came one day when there was a festival and all the soldiers had leave and went to their villages. Prithi Raj took leave with the others to allay suspicion ; but his five men stayed in the town on guard at the palace. He himself left the town and hid himself a little way out among some trees by the road. The plot that he had made with Ojah proved an entire success. The five Rajput guards had drawn their swords of a sudden and rushed at the Chief, cutting down the few court attendants who stood around. The Chief, believing that the whole body of troops were rising, fled from the castle. As Prithi Raj had anticipated he would, he rode madly down the road to take refuge in the mountains. Prithi Raj wheeled his horse out and confronted the distracted Chief as he galloped along. Taken unawares, the latter made no resistance.

and with one sweep of his sword Prithi Raj struck his head off. Then Prithi Raj rode back to Godwar. His five henchmen had meanwhile gathered troops to fight for the prince whose identity they had disclosed to the malcontent soldiery. The latter set fire to the town and massacred all who resisted. Within a few weeks Prithi Raj had organised an army and had reduced the country to order, hanging the leaders of the robbers. Then giving to the faithful Ojah the task of ruling the district on behalf of the Rana, he rode off with his followers and some of the Rajputs who had been in the service of the Meena in search of fresh conquests.

Just as he started he had news that his brother Jaimal had died a death of shame. It was in the following way that the Rana had lost his youngest son. In the Mewar country at Bednore there lived a royal refugee, the Chief of Thoda, from which he had been expelled by one Lilla, an Afghan chieftain. This prince, who was a Rajput, and to whom therefore the Rana of Mewar had been glad to afford a refuge, had a daughter, a girl of rare beauty and high spirit named Tara Bai. She was not content with the ordinary feminine life of ease and love and woman's work within a palace. All that a man could do she would do — bend a bow, throw a spear and use a sword, ride the fiercest horses and even go into battle. This Rajput maid's

fame was great throughout the land and Jaimal sought her in marriage. To this proposal her father replied that she must please herself, and that she had resolved to marry the man who should win back Thoda for him. The young prince swore that he would fulfil this condition. So he went to Bednore and was allowed to see Tara Bai. At this interview he attempted to take so gross a liberty that her father killed him on the spot. When the Rana heard the news, he declared that the old rajah did right, and he refused to avenge his son who had shamed himself and his father by his shameful act. More than that : he granted the lands of Bednore to the rajah as some compensation for the insult offered to him and his daughter.

When Prithi Raj heard the story, he resolved to win Tara Bai, a wife after his own heart. He rode to Bednore, and so high stood his fame as a daring and successful leader that, when he swore "on the faith of a Rajput" that he would win back Thoda, Tara Bai agreed to become his wife, and they were married forthwith. When the marriage ceremonies were completed, Prithi Raj lost no time in making his plans, to attack Thoda. He and his wife devised a scheme by which the town might be surprised in the midst of the Mohurram celebration. They disguised themselves, Tara being in man's clothes. With one of the five Rajputs who had been the companions of Prithi Raj since

he left Chitore, they started for Thoda city, giving orders for their cavalry to follow and muster in secret outside the city walls.

Within Thoda, the annual lamentations for the death of Hussain and Hassan, the sons of Ali, were being made around the *tasai*. All the population were making holiday and a vast crowd was collected in the central square in which stood the palace. Prithi Raj, Tara Bai and their follower mixed with the crowd close beneath the window at which the Afghan usurper stood to watch the ceremonies. Of a sudden a bow was drawn by Prithi Raj and an arrow quivered in the heart of the Afghan. In the confusion which ensued when their Chief fell lifeless among his courtiers the three conspirators made off towards the gates, separating as they went, so as to complicate pursuit. Just outside the gates stood ready three fleet horses for them. Upon these they leaped and rode hard to where their cavalry were drawn up in expectation of the fight. While the body of Lilla was taken within the palace and the angry and amazed crowd swayed round the palace gates, hundreds of infuriated Afghans seized their arms and, leaping on their horses, galloped to the gates. No sign was there of the mysterious three strangers; but, as they must have gone that way, a wild pursuit began. One officer gave one order, another shouted something else. All was confusion and, as the jostling shouting crowd spurred their

horses along the dusty road, convinced that they would overtake and punish the murderers of their Chief, the Rajput cavalry emerged from their ambush and fell upon them. Taken completely by surprise and with no one leader, the Afghans were speedily worsted. The Rajputs in serried ranks led by Prithi Raj and the dauntless Tara, charged them with flashing blades and wild battle cries. They broke at once and fled towards the city. At the gates something of a stand was made. But the Rajputs were more than their match in horsemanship and rode them down, driving them back through the gates into the narrow streets where they were cut down in scores. Then the Afghans broke finally and madly spurred their horses through the city to the northern gate, closely pursued by Prithi Raj, whose tactics were to give them no time to rally again. In the palace square the Chief's body-guard made a desperate resistance, but before sunset the flag of the Afghan had been torn down and the Rajputs were masters of Thoda.

Some of those who escaped reached Ajmere, where the Muslim governor quickly organised an army to march on Thoda. But Prithi Raj foresaw this danger. Leaving a strong guard to overawe the people, he rushed his horsemen to Ajmere and attacked the enemy while he was preparing to start. Taken completely by surprise, the Ajmere camp was captured before some had even known that they

were being attacked. By his lightning quick assault Prithi Raj was master of "the key of Rajasthan."

Within a few days he had fulfilled his marriage vow and had won besides a goodly territory for his father. The Rana had been gratified at his son's achievement at Godwar. Now when he heard of his great victories his heart yearned towards him in fatherly pride and affection. Jaimal had met a disgraceful death. Sanga was still hiding in fear of his brother's murderous wrath, so the old man sent word to Prithi Raj bidding him return home. This the Prince did at once, but he had no wish to lead a peaceful and luxurious life in a palace. Fighting was the very breath of his life; and, after he had paid his respects to his father, he gained his permission to take up his residence in the mountain fortress of Komulmer. This has been described as follows : — " A massive wall with numerous towers and pierced battlements, having a strong resemblance to the Etruscan, encloses a space of some miles extent below. The pinnacle rises, like the crown of the Hindu Cybele, tier above tier of battlements, to the summit, which is crowned with the *Badal Mahal*, or 'Cloud-palace' of the Ranas."

Here for years Prithi Raj's name became famous for his daring exploits, for his punishment and subjugation of the robber bands which infested the country, and for the peace

and safety that the poor owed to his prowess. His name was a terror to wrongdoers and his fame added lustre to the warrior record of his race. He collected thousands of horsemen and lived in state rivalling the splendour of his father in Chitore. With the latter his relations were filial and friendly ; but his father's pacific spirit displeased him. Once when he visited Chitore, he found an envoy from the Muslim Court of Malwa being treated as a friend by the Rana. When they were alone, he protested at such condescension. His father replied that Prithi Raj might find the highest happiness in being perpetually at war. He himself was too old to fight, that the Rajah of Malwa was strong and it was well to be polite to his envoy. This reply angered the proud Prithi Raj who resolved to invade Malwa. Without excuse of any kind he led his army into the Rajah's territory. The latter took the field with a far larger force ; but its movements were hampered by the state and pomp with which the Rajah marched, surrounded with courtiers, wives, concubines and all the luxurious paraphernalia of an Oriental Court. Such an unwieldy host had little chance against the fierce and hardy horsemen of Prithi Raj. Seizing his chance, that dauntless fighter attacked the camp. Sweeping down on the banner-festooned pandals and tents, Prithi Raj and his men cut their way through the amazed and panic-stricken mob. They reached the royal tent and before

the guards had recovered their wits,—those few at least who escaped the Rajput steel—they seized the Rajah and bore him from the camp. The astounded Malwa troops started in pursuit but when they were within shouting distance the guards around the Rajah, by Prithi Raj's orders, called to them that if they dared come nearer the royal prisoner would be instantly killed. If, however, they stopped pursuit, no harm would come to him. The prince was only taking him to Chitore "to touch the feet of the Rana." After that he would be sent back with all ceremony and attention. At this the pursuit was abandoned, and Prithi Raj lodged the Rajah in his camp, starting out for Chitore the next day. When some time later he brought his prisoner into his father's presence, the latter had no idea whom his son had captured. Prithi Raj bade him send for the Malwa courtier who would enlighten him as to the identity of the distinguished captive. The Rana was amazed when he realised what his son had done. The Rajah was treated with courtesy and consideration as Prithi Raj had promised, and, after paying his ransom in horses, was sent back to his dominions with an escort.

After this incident the Rana relied more than ever upon his daring son. When Soorajmul headed a rebellion against his brother, aided by Sarungdeo, a kinsman of the royal family, it was Prithi Raj who

commanded the royal forces. Soorajmul had not, it seems, forgotten the prophecy of the priestess of Charuni-Devi, that he should have dominion. Gathering troops, he obtained the aid of the Rajah of Malwa and invaded Mewar, looting and laying waste the country for miles around. The Rana took the field and in a pitched battle was all but overwhelmed, receiving himself two and twenty wounds. When the fortunes of the fight were going against him, Prithi Raj came to his aid with a thousand horse and saved the day. But Soorajmul was too strongly posted to be driven off the field; and at sundown the armies camped within a few miles of each other, neither side admitting defeat. In that dare-devil spirit which won him such fame, Prithi Raj went over at night to his uncle's camp almost unattended. Seeking out his tent, he found him having his wounds dressed. Soorajmul, alarmed, sprang up, seizing his sword. But his nephew told him not to be disturbed, that he had merely come across for a friendly talk. He declared himself hungry and his uncle had a meal served to him. After much amicable conversation, Prithi Raj returned to his own camp.

On the morrow the battle was renewed. The daring of Prithi Raj and his well disciplined troops proved too much for Soorajmul who was compelled to withdraw his forces in disorder. After a retreat—almost a route

--of several miles, the pursuit slackened and, thinking that he had quite out-distanced his enemies, Soorajmul pitched his camp in a forest, surrounding it with a hastily improvised stockade. But Prithi Raj, determined to make his victory complete, followed him up and in the middle of the night attacked the camp. Soorajmul had scarcely time to grasp his sword when Prithi Raj charged down upon his headquarters. *Talwar* in hand he sought his uncle. "He would have struck down the old man, had it not been for Sarungdeo who interposed, bidding Prithi Raj not to attack his uncle who was already wounded and wearied. But the old soldier drew himself up and declared that he would fight the young prince if it were for the good of the State. "I am old and a rebel and it matters not what is my fate. But you," he said to Prithi Raj, "are the hope of Mewar. If I chance to kill you, I shall do Chitore an irreparable wrong. Put up your sword."

Prithi Raj was so affected by his uncle's magnanimity and the tribute to his prowess and position as defender of Mewar that he laid his sword aside and embraced Soorajmul. The latter responded cordially; and the two then sat down together, the order being given for the fight to cease. But Prithi Raj was a relentless man and, when the morning dawned he schemed to end the revolt by taking his uncle's life. He asked him to go with

him to the temple of Bhavani to worship Soorajmul, possibly suspecting treachery, said that he was not able to go, wounded and worn out as he was with the fight. So Sarungdeo accompanied Prithi Raj, luckily for Soorajmul ; for in the shrine the prince drew his sword suddenly and slew Sarungdeo. Cutting off his head, he placed it, all bleeding, on the altar as his sacrifice. A panic ensued among Sarungdeo's attendants. Some of them were cut down, and others fled back to Soorajmul with the news and bade him fly, for Prithi Raj would surely return immediately to kill him too. The old man had just time to escape before his blood-thirsty young kinsman arrived. Mounting his fleetest horse and attended by a score or so of horsemen, he reached Sadri, the territory that he had wrested from the Rana at the beginning of the revolt. There he rested for a few days. But, certain that Prithi Raj would hunt him down, he determined, before leaving Mewar forever, to take an ingenious revenge. "If I cannot keep the district," he said, "It shall be for those who are stronger than the Rana ;" and he surrendered the land as a pious gift to the Brahmins. This infuriated Raimul who was, however, powerless. To take the land from the priests would mean, the Hindu believes, many thousand years of torture in hell.

Then Soorajmul rode south and he never returned to Mewar. In a distant district,

part jungle, part desert, he settled down and founded the town of Deola, building a fortress there. The legend is that the prophecy of the priestesses of Charuni-Devi was actually fulfilled, and that his choice of the spot was decided by his witnessing a fight between a wolf and a she-goat who was bravely defending her kid. In Deola he died, leaving sons whom he taught to look to Chitore as their homeland. Years later, when the Rana of the day surrendered ignominiously to the army of Akbar, the Chief of Deola gave his life for Chitore.

Soon after the fight of Soorajinul, Prithi Raj heard news of his long-missing brother Sanga. The latter was about to marry, so it was reported. The old bitter jealousy of Prithi Raj revived and he was on the point of starting to hunt down his brother and thus clear his road to the throne, when he received an appeal from his sister. She had married the Chief of Sirolfi, but her life in her new home was proving most unhappy. The prince, to whom she had taken a large dowry, including the district of Mount Abu, was a complete slave to the habit of opium-eating so common among Rajputs. But unlike most of them, he was immoderate in the use of the drug. When under its influence he actually ill-treated his wife with blows and indignities, such as making her sleep on the floor, dragging her from her bed by force. The princess now

sent word to Mewar, demanding that she should be taken home. Prithi Raj went at once in response to this pathetic appeal and forced an entrance into the palace at night. Making his way to the royal bedchamber, he found the princess in tears on the floor, while the drug-sodden chief lay in a stupor on the bed. In his rage Prithi Raj would have taken his brother-in-law's life there and then, had not his sister on her knees begged him to spare him, as he was about to stab him to the heart. Prithi Raj put up his dagger, and, rousing the prince, bade him make reparation to his wife and her house by putting her shoes on his head and kneeling before her and touching her feet. To this humiliation, the greatest an Indian husband can suffer, the terrified man submitted; and it seemed that he had learned his lesson, for afterwards he treated his wife with respect and affection. Prithi Raj stayed as an honoured guest in the palace for some days. But the Chief's degradation, which he feared to attempt to revenge on Prithi Raj by force of arms, preyed on his mind. When his brother-in-law was about to start on his return journey to Chitore, he meanly contrived his death. Offering him poisoned sweetmeats, the unsuspecting Prithi Raj ate some. After a few miles the deadly drug in them began to take effect. When almost in sight of Komulmer, the prince was unable to ride on. He sent a messenger to his wife, begging her to come

to his side ; but, though she had but a few miles to travel, she did not reach him in time. When Tara Bai arrived only to find him a corpse, she bade the attendants build the funeral pyre and her lord's body was laid thereon, with his head in her lap. Then the flames leaped up and the warrior and his warrior-wife passed together, as their religion taught them to believe, to Indra's heaven.

. RANA SANGA.

IN the last story it has been related how the tireless and murderous jealousy of Prithi Raj towards his elder brother forced that prince to exile as long as the former lived. Sanga was to prove himself one of the bravest and greatest of the rulers of Mewar. He was to earn the title of Singram, "Lion of Battle," and was at last to yield to one who was destined to be master of India. But before his brother's overbearing ferocity and unnatural hatred he was cowed and sought a refuge where he could hide from that merciless persecution. When the Rahtore had died at the entrance of the sanctuary and by his brave unselfishness had made his escape possible, Sanga, without a single follower, had ridden on the Rahtore's fresh horse to the limits of his father's dominions. There he would have starved (for he dared not disclose his identity), but for the friendliness of a headman. Sanga had left the tired horse by the wayside and had got rid of his fine clothes, obtaining an ordinary peasant's dress from a ryot. Thus disguised to defeat the search for him that he was certain Prithi Raj would have made, he wandered on for many miles homeless and all but starving till he fell in with the headman. The latter, touched by the friendless condition of the

young man, and in response to Sanga's request for field work, bade him herd his cattle for his keep. But the buffaloes, which were docile enough with the merest children from the village, allowing tiny boys to mount them and beat them and pull their ears, heeded not the strange youth. They strayed and had to be found and driven back by the villagers each evening. Then the headman gave the prince work in the house instead. But, as in the story of the English King Alfred the Great, the royal servant, set to watch cakes cooking, forgot them and angered the headman's wife. She drove him from the door and bade her husband waste no further efforts at helping an undeserving fool who could neither prevent cattle from straying nor cakes from burning.

With no money or friends the unhappy prince started forth again on his wanderings. He tramped through the country till he came to the state of Srinagar. There, as he wearily walked along the dusty road, he was overtaken by a band of Rajput horsemen, who, to his surprise, leapt from their horses and knelt before him. They were subjects of the Rana and, despite his torn and dusty dress, they had recognised the heir to the throne. They bade him have no fear, that he was their future king and for him they would give their lives. They told him that they were in the service of the Chief of Srinagar and that, as it was well that his rank should be kept secret, lest

Prithi Raj should hear of him and hunt him down, he had best take service with them. They could easily say that he was a young Rajput of Mewar who had wandered into the country and fallen in with them. To this suggestion Sanga gratefully agreed. He was taken by them back to Srinagar, where they had no difficulty in getting him enrolled as one of the Chief's men-at-arms. For many months Sanga served thus. He took part in several warlike expeditions, his faithful Rajputs finding many chances of sparing him work and dangers and of showing him secretly the attentions and respect due to his rank. On one of these campaigns, led by the Chief himself, during the mid-day halt Sanga was lying asleep apart from the other troops, while the Mewari Rajputs, as was their custom, cooked his food. A herdsman, who passed by the troops, stopped amazed before the sleeping prince. A cobra had glided to his head and was standing on its tail as if to strike but spreading its crest over him protectingly ; while on the creature's outspread hood a tiny black and white bird had settled and was chirping. The peasant cried out to the troops, and then he knelt before Sanga who, awakened by the man's shout, found himself addressed in the language of a subject to his king. In a moment, realising his danger, the young prince bade the man hold his foolish tongue, that he was only a soldier of the Chief of Srinagar,

but the fellow was too excited to heed. He assured Sanga and his companions that animals had senses other than men's, that the serpent and the bird had paid him the respect due to his royal birth, and there was no doubt that they were a sign that he would one day sit on a throne. As he went on his way, the man told other soldiers of what he had seen and declared that the Rajput soldier was a prince. This incident was talked of and at last news of it reached the ears of the Chief himself. He sent for Sanga and bade him tell him the truth. This, after much hesitation, the prince did, and the Chief at once promoted him to a high place at the Court, promising him help against his brothers and offering him his daughter in marriage. This startling change in his brother's fortunes soon reached the ears of Prithi Raj. As was narrated in the last tale, he was about to start out against his brother when the message from his sister took him upon the expedition which ended in his death through poison.

The Rana Raimul did not long survive Prithi Raj. His reign had not been a period of great glory for Mewar. He had ever been a peace-lover and the domestic tragedies which marred the period of his rule had been a source of much sorrow to him. But, if there had been no glory for the state, he had ruled justly and well and had lived to see recovered much of the territory lost to his house under his half-brother,

the parricide. To him succeeded Sanga who was to earn by his brilliant campaigns the title of "the lion of battle," but whose reign was to end in overwhelming disaster for Rajasthan..

No sooner was Sanga seated on the *gadi* than he started on a series of wars, chiefly against the Muslim kings of Delhi and Malwa. Sanga was a high-minded sovereign who had the good of the people at heart ; but he was as much a fighter, as his father had been a lover of peace, and his fame as a leader rallied all Rajputana to his flag. Marwar, Amber, Ajmere, Boondi were his willing allies, and such Hindu states as Gwalior and Kalpi obeyed his summons to war and recognised him as their commander-in-chief on the field. "From the Malwa plain to the Abuscars" he held undisputed sway ; and the magic of his name rallied all Rajasthan to oppose the ever-increasing Muslim menace. The period opened gloriously for the Rajputs under his guidance. Eighteen pitched battles were fought against the armies of Delhi and Malwa, and with unvarying success. Another monarch of Malwa had to acknowledge Sanga a victor as triumphant as had been his grandfather against a former ruler of that state. Mewar gained territory in every direction and under his overlordship the smaller Rajput states flourished.

There is a legend touching his invincibility. It is said that he possessed a talisman which

he owed to a *deota*, an incarnation of one of the lesser gods. This man, when passing through Mewar, was a guest of the Rana. Sanga realised his divine origin and paid him such devoted homage and showed him such respectful and generous hospitality that, as a mark of his gratitude, the *deota* gave him a charm in a bag which he bade him wear always round his neck. But he warned him that it must rest ever on his breast; that so long, and only so long as it was in that position would victory always attend him. If the charm hung on his back, ill would befall and defeat would overtake him. As proof of his power to fulfil his promise he gave him a magic peacock's feather. "Go forth," he said, "and touch with this all who are lying dead in the city and they shall live again." And it was even as he said; Sanga had power by a mere touch of the feather on the corpse to raise from the dead.

The talisman ever lay on his breast, and the fame of his conquests increased and his armies were undefeated. But there was soon to come into India one who was to end the glories of Sanga's wars and break the power of Rajasthan. There was grave disaffection in Delhi, where the Afghan line of Sultans, those of the House of Lodi, was coming to a ruinous end. Sultan Ibrahim was proving an oppressive and tyrannical ruler. The merciless cruelty with which several revolts were suppressed by him

caused further outbreaks till the condition of affairs became chaotic. A kinsman of the Sultan, Daulat Khan Lodi, the Governor of Lahore, appealed to the King of Kabul, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad, surnamed Babar—"the lion-hearted"—the hereditary Khan of Khokand. He was sixth in descent from Timur and on his mother's side he claimed Jenghiz Khan as ancestor. He had become master of Kabul in 1504 and of Kandahar in 1522.

On receiving Daulat Khan's message Babar at once decided to go to the assistance of the disaffected subjects of Sultan Ibrahim. He crossed the Indus in 1525 with some 13,000 troops, mostly Turkomans. Entering Lahore, he arrested and deposed Daulat Khan on the assumption that a man who had been a traitor to the Sultan might be a most undesirable person to have on his line of retreat if he were worsted in his bid for Delhi. Ibrahim Lodi marched to meet him, and the armies met at Panipat, that historic field upon which the fortunes of India have been four times decided. The Sultan had 100,000 men and 1,000 elephants, so it is recorded : and the odds were thus immensely in his favour. But Babar had proved himself an astute strategist on many a hard-fought field and he fortified his position, leaving to his enemy the disadvantage of being the attacking party. Ibrahim allowed himself to be lured into repeated reckless attacks which physically exhausted his troops and took the

heart out of them. Then at the critical moment Babar ordered his finest cavalry to charge the wearied hordes, first pouring in a merciless flight of arrows. Taken unawares, the Afghans made but a feeble resistance. Thousands fell, among them the Sultan himself, and on his death the vast host fled in disorder. "The sun." Babar records in his memoirs, "had mounted spear-high when the onset began, and the battle lasted till midday, when the enemy were completely broken and routed and my people victorious and triumphant."

This was on the 21st of April, 1526, and the battle changed the future of India. After resting his troops for a few days, Babar marched on Agra, which he captured. Both Afghans and Rajputs believed that they would soon be rid of Babar ; that he would repeat the history of the invasion of Timur and, after glutting his army with the loot of Delhi and Agra, would return to Kabul. But Babar had come to stay : and he set to work to restore order throughout the dominions of the fallen House of Lodi ; while he despatched his eldest son and successor, Humayun, against the Rajput provinces in revolt. This was the signal for a general call to arms in Rajasthan and the princes joined to attempt to restore the *Kshatriya* rule throughout India. There rallied under the sun-centred crimson banner of the Rana "eighty thousand horse, seven rajahs of

the highest rank, nine raos and one hundred and four chieftains bearing the title of 'rawul' and 'rawut,' with five hundred war elephants." At the head of this splendid array Sanga advanced against the fortress of Biana. Babar sent an advance guard of his army, some fifteen hundred horse, to raise the siege. Only a few score struggled back to report to him the ferocity and bravery of the Rajputs, while Sanga marched on in triumph towards the fateful plain of Kanwaha. It is related that, while besieging Biana, the old Rana, when bathing, discovered that the string of the talisman had twisted round so that the charm hung on his back, an omen of his approaching doom.

Undismayed by the defeat before Biana and the accounts brought in of the strength of the enemy, Babar advanced swiftly and camped at Kanwaha, the spot Sanga had proposed should be the northern boundary of Mewar. War was a leisurely business in those times of immense transport difficulties, and Babar busied himself for some days in making his camp secure. Gun-carriages and baggage-wagons were chained together to protect his front, while deep trenches were dug "backed by portable wooden tripods on wheels, lashed together at a few paces apart." Among his cannon was one heavy piece called "the victorious gun," which could be fired at what was then the extraordinary rate of more than once an hour.

The Rajput army encamped some miles away, and thus the two hosts faced one another for two weeks or so. It was to be, both leaders well knew, a fateful battle, and it is probably true that this pause was employed in making peace proposals or negotiations for a settlement. Between Babar and his real base at Kabul lay an immense stretch of hostile country. Retreat through this would become almost impossible if he suffered a serious set-back. If he sustained a defeat, annihilation awaited him ; not one of his men would live to reach home. Such counsels of prudence must have naturally had much weight with Babar, though his was an imperious nature. A conqueror all his life, he was now at the zenith of his powers, mental and physical. It is related of him that he could carry a full-grown man under each arm round the walls of a fortress, leaping the embrasures. For years he had endured the hardships of campaigning and is said to have set his soldiers the strenuous example of swimming every river his army had to cross. Such a man could not share the apprehensions of some of his soldiery at meeting so redoubtable a foe as the Rajput. But ordinary caution dictated that he should come to terms with Sanga, if he could do so without humiliation. It is believed that he offered the latter terms honourable enough for proud Rajputana. The "yellow rivulet" was still to be the northern frontier of Mewar ; and Babar would pay a

yearly tribute to the Rana in return for his being left in undisputed possession of those portions of the Delhi Empire which he had conquered. These proposals seem so fair that it is surprising that the old and prudent Sanga, realising as he must have the final nature of the impending battle, did not accept them. It is suggested by Rajput chronicles that they were never fairly put before him, that his envoy, Sillaidi of the Tuar tribe, betrayed him. Be that as it may, the negotiations came to nothing and on 16th March, 1527, the fate of India,—whether it was to be dominated by Rajput or Muslim,—was decided at the battle of Sikri (afterwards called by the Mahomedans Fatehpur Sikri), “the City of Victory.”

That Babar had doubts as to his ability to defeat the Rajput princes seems shown by his pious conduct before the struggle began. He has recorded that, “having mounted to survey his posts” he was impressed with the opportuneness of putting into effect a long cherished resolution “to make an effectual repentance.” In pursuance of this laudable determination he took a solemn pledge to abstain for the future from all wine and alcohol. He broke up his gold and silver goblets and gave the pieces to the poor and dervishes. The royal cellars were emptied, the contents being poured upon the parched earth; and he swore that if victory was his, he would remit some of the taxes levied on his Muslim subjects. This spirit

of piety and self-denial spread through his army. Many hundreds of his officers made vows of reformation, and by a fanatical address Babar enflamed the religious fervour of the Islam soldiery, proclaiming the war to be holy—a veritable *jihad*. Addressing the troops he said: “Every man that comes into the world must pass away; God alone is immortal and unchanging. Who sits down to the feast of life must end by drinking the cup of death. All visitors to the inn of mortality must one day leave this house of sorrow. Rather let us die with honour than live disgraced. With fame, though I die, I am content. Let fame be mine, though life be spent. God most high has been gracious in giving us this destiny, that if we fall we die martyrs; if we conquer, we triumph in His holy cause. Let us swear with one accord, by the great name of God, that we will never turn back from such a death or shrink from the stress of battle, till our souls are parted from our bodies.”

To this appeal to their fanaticism the Muslim soldiery responded with eager shouts. History has shown in the annals of peoples other than those who profess Islam that there is no more potent incitement to courage and endurance in war than that derived from a bigoted piety. The soldiers of Oliver Cromwell are standing examples of what piety can do in an army. Religion, which should teach feelings of

forbearance and humaneness can, alas ! arm most men with an irresistible ferocity. The Mahomedan world has, however, afforded the most striking instances of religious military frenzy, and the army of Babar heard with joy the order to join battle with the Hindus. But it was the first time that the men had faced the Rajput cavalry ; and when those fierce riders, led by their Chiefs, galloped down upon them, it seemed as if the army of Babar must be swept out of its fortifications and driven in headlong flight across the plain. With sword and spear the Rajputs dealt death on every side, charging and wheeling and charging again, heedless of the losses they were suffering from Babar's cannon. For some hours the Muslim lines were but just able to keep intact. Hundreds of the best of Babar's men were beheaded or cut to the ground by men whose amazing courage and superb horsemanship seemed to promise them victory. But Babar was employing the same strategy that had succeeded against Sultan Ibrahim ; he allowed the Rajputs to exhaust even their wonderful energies, and then he prepared to take the offensive. He ordered "his flanking columns to wheel and charge in the famous Mongol tactics, while at the same time he ordered his guns forward and sent out the household troops at the gallop on each side of his centre of matchlock men who also advanced firing."

It was this moment that the Rajput traitor Sillaidi the Tuar, commanding the vanguard of Sanga's army, chose to desert. The Rajputs were exhausted by their ferocious charges. Outflanked both on the left and right and dismayed at the desertion of a section of their own men, they became a disorganised mob. Fighting desperately on three fronts, they were driven at last into a mass so closely hemmed in that they were in each other's way. They could neither charge at nor strike the foe who mowed them down with cannon-balls. Out of this *mêlée* some few hundreds escaped, but the bulk of the Rana's army perished on the field. He himself was taken from the battle by his attendants ; but many Chiefs were slaughtered, and when the battle ended Babar ordered to be erected a "tower of victory," a pyramid of the heads of the princes and nobles who had fallen.

Broken, crushed, all but annihilated, the Rajput army at Sikri ceased to be a menace to the now firmly established Mogul Empire. Babar had for the time no more to fear from Rajasthan, though Sanga had escaped and was defiant. It was not part of the Emperor's plan to invade and harry the Rajput States. Satisfied with the crushing defeat he had inflicted, he left Rajputana to itself for a while. The Rana kept the field, declaring that he would only return to his capital a conqueror, that in the meantime the gates of Chitore were to be left always open. But his glory had

departed ; no effort that he could make could mitigate or retrieve the crippling blow Rajasthan had suffered. He lived less than a year after Sikri. His death, some traditions declare, was due to poison, but probably he died of exhaustion and as the result of his wounds, of which he is said to have borne no less than eighty.

THE SECOND SACK OF CHITORE.

BABAR did not long outlive his triumph at Fatchpur Sikri. Within three years he was dead and upon his son Humayun fell the task of consolidating and organising the Empire he had won. During the remainder of his reign Babar made no further war on the Rajput princes. His victory was complete and a generation was needed for Rajasthan to recover from her humiliations. Babar was a shrewd man. He recognised the disadvantage and unwisdom of pushing his triumph to the point of harrying those who had made him pay so highly for his victory. So the Rajputs were left in peace, and this period of recuperation was extended by the reign of Humayun much of whose time was occupied in settling family feuds and dealing with insurgent kinsmen. The new Emperor was as weak and irresolute as his father had been strong and self-willed. But his weakness was but a facet of an amiable and chivalrous nature and was not accompanied by the cruelty and cunning that so often characterise feeble and vacillating rulers. Humayun's record shows him to have been a man of high ideals, the soul of honour, brave, humane and swayed usually by the noblest sentiments. He was too irresolute and kind-hearted to fill adequately the rôle for which he

was cast by birth, and his reign was a period of internal disorder and turbulence. The Afghans gave him constant trouble and for fifteen years, from 1540 to 1555, were in complete possession of Mahomedan India.

Sanga's eldest surviving son, Rutna, had succeeded the "lion of battle." His temperament was as pugnacious and unbending as had been his father's. He ordered that the gates of Chitore should remain open, as commanded by Sanga, saying proudly: "Let them be; the gates of Chitore are Delhi and Mandu." But this arrogant refusal to acknowledge defeat was an attitude which the rulers of Delhi could afford to ignore, and Rutna's reign was marked by no revival of Mewar's glorious past. His throne even was threatened by the ambitions of one of his father's widows, Jawahir Bai, a princess of Marwar, who sought to gain Babar's favour for her son Bikramjit. On the death of the old Rana she sent secretly to the Emperor offering him the crown of Mahmud, first Muslim ruler of Malwa, which had so long rested in the treasure house of Chitore, and the cession of the fortress of Ranthambhor, one of the strongest in Mewar. To this appeal Babar refused to listen, and Rutna succeeded as his father's lawful heir. But he was not destined to live long. His death was due to a feud which had arisen between him and Soorajmul, prince of Boondi. While his father was alive, he had married by proxy a princess of Ajmere.

On his accession for some reason not explained by the Rajput chronicles, he had failed to confirm the marriage and to claim his bride. Soorajmul, a less hesitating lover, wooed and won the maid, not knowing at the time that she was betrothed to Rutna. This caused the latter to bear a grudge against Soorajmul. At a hunting party he treacherously shot him with an arrow, afterwards cutting him down with his sword. The dying man taunted his murderer, and Rutna rode back to give him his death blow. As had most Rajput legendary heroes, Soorajmul had abnormally long arms, and though weakened with the flow of blood he was able to stretch up and pull the Rana from his saddle. Rolling over with him, he stabbed him to the heart and then fell dead on him.

Rutna was succeeded by Bikramjit. Of his character the Rajput chronicles say little that is favourable. He seems to have had none of that stern pride characteristic of the Rajputs, and he delighted in the companionship of men of low caste, such as wrestlers and prize fighters. He added to the dislike and disapproval he so earned by the arrogant and contemptuous way in which he treated his nobles and chieftains. The climax of discontent among the latter was reached when, with a wisdom which proved him to be much in advance of his age, he desired to revolutionise the Rajput type of fighting. With the advent of the gun the

days of chivalry were ended. The slaughter at Fatehpur Sikri had shown the hopelessness of Rajput bravery pitted against the new metal monsters belching iron ball, breaking horses' limbs and crushing life out of the noblest breast ere the flashing *talwar* could find its goal on the neck or in the heart of the foe. Bikramjit realised that the reckless charge of opium-maddened horsemen was never going to restore the fortunes of Mewar. He resolved to go with the spirit of the age and adopt the cannon and matchlock. But this meant fighting on foot, and by the Rajput it was then held (as it has been even till to-day, at any rate in a modified degree), to be a disgrace to go into battle on foot. Therefore when the Rana proposed to employ a part of his forces as infantry and artillery, he met with sullen refusals. No persuasion, and no reasoning as to the futility of employing sword and lance-armed troops against gunpowder were of the least avail; and it ended in Bikramjit hiring men to fight as he desired. This was an affront which the Rajput nobles would not brook. That the Rana should look to mere mercenaries to defend the state was held to be a signal proof of his unworthiness to be the leader of Rajput chivalry. The discontent created by his arrogance and preference for the low castes quickly developed into open turbulence. His power was mocked at; the chieftains retired to their castles and defied him.

The country was swept by robber bands, who looted villages and raided cattle even from the pastures just outside Chitore. Not a noble would stir at the summons of their sovereign to check the marauders. Bikramjit, however, was obstinate. He revenged himself by increasing the number of his mercenaries, upon whom he lavished doles and conferred honours and high posts.

The chaotic condition of affairs in Mewar encouraged attack ; and Bahadur Shah, King of Gujarat, who had then recently wrested Malwa from the Emperor Humayun, invaded the country. The new owner of Malwa inherited the enmity engendered between the two states by the victory of the Rana Kumbho over its first Moslem ruler and by Prithi Raj's daring exploit. Malwa had suffered much from Rajput arrogance and Bahadur Shah thought it an excellent opportunity to teach his proud neighbours a lesson. Gathering a large force, he marched against the Rana who was then in Boondi.

Bikramjit had the fearlessness of his breed. With a boldness worthy of Sanga he prepared to face his enemy. His chieftains and nobles, however, refused to obey his summons, and thus he was left with his hirelings on whom he knew he could not depend in such an emergency and against such heavy odds. He was, therefore, "compelled to evade a battle with Bahadur Shah who turned aside to attack

Chitore when he heard that the nobles of Mewar were gathering there.

Though they flouted the Rana's appeal as that of a man unworthy of their allegiance, their love of country and pride of race were too strong to allow them to see the Musalmans overrun the land without striking a blow. Was there not yet another son of Sanga, the infant born to him after his death by a princess of Boondi? Round him the Princes and Chiefs gathered then at Chitore;—the remnant of the fighting men of the Chondawut clan which was so cut up at Fatehpur Sikri, the Rao of Mount Abu, the Rao Arjuna of Boondi, despite the fact that his predecessor had been treacherously murdered by Rana Rutna; and from Deola came Baghji, son of Soorajmul, whom Prithi Raj had driven into exile. All rallied to defend the capital.

But now the chivalrous Rajput warriors were to learn how wise was the decision of Bikramjit to keep abreast of the times. Bahadur Shah's cannon battered the city walls; while mines were placed in tunnellings beneath the ramparts and blew great holes in the fortifications. The combat was as unequal as one of mice with men. It mattered not that the "mice" were some of the stoutest-hearted warriors of India. They were out-matched and the reckless courage shown in many a sally from the doomed city was but a waste of noble lives. Arjuna of Boondi held the bastion near the

mound raised by Ala-ud-din at the first sack of the city. Beneath this part of the wall a mine was laid and "seated on a fragment of the rock, disparted by the explosion, Arjuna drew his sword and the world beheld his departure with amazement." The remnant of the five hundred troops of the Itara clan—his followers whom he had led to Chitore,—were blown to pieces with him and forty-five cubits of the rampart disappeared at the same time.

The breaches were gallantly defended, but it was clear that, unless outside aid was obtained, soon all would be over. In this crisis Bikramjit's mother, Jawahir Bai, thought to inspire the fighters to still greater efforts by herself heading a sally, in which she was killed. Karnavati, the mother of the infant prince, Udai Singh, for whom the chieftains fought, made an appeal to Humayun. There is an ancient Rajput custom by which on a certain day, sacred to the gods a woman, be she maid or wife, can win the service of any man, if she but send him a bracelet. The gewgaw may be of gold and jewels or of silk and spangles; its value matters not. But if the man to whom it is sent accepts it and signifies that he does so by sending in return an embroidered bodice, he is bound by the token on his wrist as the woman's adopted brother. Thenceforward he is her knight to do her bidding and defend her. Karnavati made a silken bracelet and

sent a messenger by night through the enemy's camp, bidding him seek out the Emperor Humayun, and give him the token. Faithfully the queen's envoy fulfilled her behest. He sought in vain for the Emperor in Delhi and Agra, but at last in Bengal he found him at the head of an army, suppressing a rebellion. When Humayun heard the story of Chitore's dire peril and understood the appeal made to him on behalf of the baby prince Udai Singh by his mother, he was much moved and started out at once with his troops to rescue the confiding princess and her son. Desperate as was Chitore's plight, had Humayun pressed on he might have saved the city. But, when within striking distance of Bahadur Shah, he lingered while he sent messengers to protest against a resort to extremities.

Thus the last hope of the gallant defenders vanished. The infant prince was sent out of Chitore by night, and the Rajput women prepared for the awful rite of *johur*, while the men made ready to sell their lives dearly. A huge funeral pyre was hurriedly built and upon it thirteen thousand women with the Rani Karnavati at their head immolated themselves. Others died by poison or the dagger. When the flames leaped up around their devoted wives, the men in gala dress, saffron robes and coronets, led by Baghji of Deola, rushed upon their foes through the breaches in the walls and by the wide-flung gates. Desperately, they hacked

and slashed, each making a couch of dead Muslims for him to fall upon when overcome by numbers. For hours the remnant of the garrison of thirty odd thousand who had rallied to defend Udai Singh struggled against the artillery of Bahadur Shah. Again and again, the ferocity of their onslaught drove the troops of Islam from their guns and forced the matchlockmen to retreat and reform. But it was a struggle of desperation against overwhelming odds, and on ground sodden with blood the last Rajputs of that gallant band met their end before the sun had set. Over their corpses the army of Bahadur Shah marched into the city where smouldered the altars of fire on which the women of Chitore had made the sacrifice of love and chastity.

The Emperor, whose hesitation to give battle to Bahadur Shah is said to have been due to his unwillingness to attack his co-religionists during their struggle with the Hindus, advanced upon Chitore after some days. Bahadur Shah, relying on his artillery, lay awaiting the imperial army in a strongly fortified camp. But Humayun surrounded the city and, commanding the whole country, was able to starve the King of Gujarat into an ignominious flight. With its broken ramparts and its stores depleted the city was useless now to the victors. No food could be had and starvation confronted the Gujaratis. After some days of desperate fighting, and

when every effort to cut their way through the imperial troops had failed, Bahadur Shah, disguising himself and taking with him a few attendants, managed to escape by night. When at dawn they realised that they were deserted by their king, his troops surrendered or fled, and Humayun entered Chitore in triumph. Almost his first act was to summon back Bikramjit, whom he re-installed with pomp and ceremony as Rana and vassal to Delhi. Bahadur Shah escaped for the time ; and his kingdoms of Malwa and Gujarat were seized by Humayun who thought that his victory had ensured a lasting peace. But he had failed to save Chitore or to keep his knightly tryst with the Rani Karnavati. Misfortune was accumulating for him. Bahadur Shah was to re-appear soon, and years of Afghan turbulence were in store for the kindly but irresolute prince. He was fated to wander homeless in the Rajasthan over which he seemed for the time so firmly established as overlord, but which in its dire day of peril he had so unworthily failed to aid.

UDAI SINGH.

THE fact that Bikramjit had been restored as Rana by the Muslims, and had had the sword of state girded on him by their Emperor as token of his vassalage to Delhi, was in itself sufficient to deprive him of the loyalty of the Rajput Chiefs and nobles. But there were other reasons why the unpopularity he had earned before the siege of Chitore should break out again in an exaggerated form. His humiliation and the rebellious attitude of his subjects which had exposed Chitore to Bahadur Shah's attack had failed to teach him his lesson. No sooner was he again master of his kingdom than he renewed that arrogance of manner and exhibited that preference for the society of the degraded and the low caste which had caused such deep offence before. For some time after Humayun's departure peace was kept. The Rana was the lawful heir and the legitimate son of "the lion of battle." Moreover he was no coward. If his manners were coarse and overbearing, his courage was unquestionable. There was no other rightful heir to the throne save his brother Uday Singh, still a mere child of four or five, and the climax of Mewar's woes would be reached, it was felt, if there were a protracted regency.

Thus the Chiefs bore with the Rana's ways as patiently as they could in the interests of the state. But their endurance was soon taxed

to breaking point. Gratified and deceived by the submission and deference of his vassals, Bikramjit lost at last all measure in his insolence. The climax was reached when one day in full assembly of the chieftains he struck the lord of Ajmere for some trifling cause. All the Chiefs sprang to their feet. Such an outrage was not to be borne by Rajputs from the noblest of overlords, and Bikramjit had no claim to be so regarded. Moreover, the gross impropriety of the act was made worse by the fact that the chieftain struck was an old man and one to whom the sons of Sanga were deeply indebted. For it was he who as Chief of Srinagar had helped Sanga and had given him not only a refuge against his brother Prithi Raj but his daughter in marriage, showing to him the affection of a father. In token of his gratitude for those years of protection and kindness Sanga had bestowed on him the lordship of Ajmere. The insult to the old Chief was an insult to all, the culminating outrage of a whole series of affronts. The Rana had at last gone too far and with angry murmurs and looks of defiance the Chiefs withdrew in a body. There could be but one sequel: Bikramjit, the insolent young sovereign whose waywardness had brought such ruin on Mewar, must go. The assembly debated. They were loath to be disloyal or to turn away from the direct line of Sanga so long as sons of his lived. But a new ruler must be found who would restore and

maintain the majesty and dominion of the state during those many years which must pass before it were possible to know aught definite of the character of the infant Udai Singh. Perchance the child might grow to be a second Sanga. Meanwhile a strong man was needed, and the Chiefs turned in their dilemma to the son of Prithi Raj, Prince Bunbeer. It was true that he could not sit beneath the crimson sun-centred banner in the seat of Bappa Rawul ; for, though his father was of the blood royal, his mother had been but a slave maiden. But, if he were true to his breeding, he would make a strong regent, and it was as such that the nobles begged him to come to Chitore.

Bunbeer received the invitation with a becoming modesty, an attitude which confirmed the Chiefs in their conviction that their decision was a wise one. But he was merely acting a part. In arrogance he was to prove a second Bikramjit ; for the moment, until he felt secure in his new position, he exhibited a reluctance to accept an honour which he regarded as merely a stepping stone to the throne. Ambitious and unscrupulous, conscious that he was no lawful heir to the throne of Bappa Rawul, he resolved, nevertheless, to usurp it. Duped by his hesitation, the nobles pressed him the more eagerly to assume the regency, and with much show of unwillingness he was installed. His first act was one of violence. Bikramjit, deserted by all,

prepared to fly with such of his mercenaries as would follow him. But it was too late. Bunbeer could not attain his ambition while the sons of Sanga lived, and the deposed Rana was assassinated in the very night of the regent's installation. Rajput tradition declares that he was killed by Bunbeer's own hand. It is easy to imagine how this was contrived without arousing the suspicions of the Chiefs by too cold-blooded an act. A meeting of the two men, the demand of the regent for submission, an arrogant refusal, a scene, swords drawn, the guard summoned and in the confusion Bikramjit struck down.

Encouraged by the success of his plans, Bunbeer meditated a still darker deed. He had been called to govern Mewar during the minority of Udai Singh, the baby prince who, innocent of palace plots and of his great destiny, was living in the women's apartments. While he survived, the illegitimate son of Prithi Raj knew himself a mere political makeshift for the discontented nobles. The child must be put out of the way. A daring plan was daringly and swiftly put into execution. The story is one of the most romantic and pathetic in all Indian or other history, and has formed the subject of a beautiful ballad by Sir Edwin Arnold, who, however, took much poetical licence with the traditional facts. These appear to be as follows :—
Udai Singh's mother had died as a Rajput

woman should on the funeral pyre when the city was sacked by Bahadur Shah. The boy was in the charge of his foster mother Panna (Sir Edwin calls her Moṭi*) whose own son of the same age was his playmate. Over the two children the faithful woman watched at night. They had fallen asleep, tired after their day's play, in each other's arms lulled by her cradle-songs, when a terrified man-servant—the cook, it is said,—hurried into the room. He whispered his awful warning. The regent, sword in hand, was in the women's part of the palace, seeking for Udai Singh. No guard had dared to stop him. In a few minutes he would come to murder the only obstacle left to his treacherous ambitions. Panna made up her loyal mind in a second. She would change the children ; her little son must die for his prince. Hastily she snatched up Udai Singh and tore from him his head-cloth and the girdle of pearls from his waist. These marks of his rank she bound on her boy. Sir Edwin, who makes hired assassins, not Bunbeer himself, the murderers, tells the rest of the tragedy in the following verse :—

“And laid her own dear offspring, her flesh and blood,
on the floor,
“With the girdle of pearls around him, and the cap
that the King's son wore ;

* Panna=diamond ; moti=pearl.

“ While close to her heart, which was breaking, she folded the Raja’s joy,

“ And—even as the murderers lifted the purdah—she fled with his boy.

“ But there (so they deemed) in his jewels lay the Chota Rana, the Heir ;

“ ‘ The cow with two calves has escaped us ’ cried one ‘ it is right and fair

“ She should save her own *bachcha*. No matter The edge of the dagger ends

“ This spark of Lord Raghoba’s sunlight : stab thrice and four times, O friends ! ’

“ And the Rajput women will have it (I know not if this can be so)

“ That Moti’s son in the *putta* and golden cap cooed low,

“ When the sharp blades met in his small heart, with never one moan or wince,

“ But died with a babe’s light laughter, because he died for his prince.”

One version has it that Panna or Moti hid the baby in a basket covering him with leaves, and that the cook carried him out of the palace. The guards did not interfere, as they were accustomed to see the servant going and coming with baskets of foodstuffs and fruit. This story goes on to relate that the faithful man, as previously arranged with Panna, awaited her hidden in a dry *nullah*, the foster-mother actually handing her own child to Bunbeer. It must be remembered that the boys were five or six, and thus the basket version is unlikely. Unless drugged, it is hardly credible that little Udai Singh, waked suddenly from his sleep

and having his clothes torn off him and being thrust into a fruit basket, would not make some very noisy and persistent protests. No doubt the noble foster-mother escaped with him clasped to her, with which position he would be quite content and quiet, while his poor little playmate with his borrowed jewels lay crying on the floor till the cruel steel silenced him.

At any rate Bunbeer was apparently satisfied that the foul night's work completed the destruction of Sanga's sons, and Panna did escape from Chitore and made her way to Deola. At that time the Chief there was the son of Baghji who had been crowned king and had given his life as an offering to the goddess Bhavani at the second sack of Chitore. Though he listened with sympathy to the pitiful tale Panna told, he dared not give a refuge to so dangerous a guest as the baby prince. Bunbeer's short spell of power had proved him to be merciless, and the Chief dreaded his vengeance if he discovered the trick played on him. So poor Panna wandered on, accompanied, it is said, by the faithful cook, to Dangapore. There the same timorous answer was made to her appeal. At last she found her way to Komulmer, then occupied by a governor called Assa Sah, who was not a Rajput but a member of a mercantile tribe and of the faith of the Jains. The journey must have taken a long while. But Panna was freed by that time from

all fear of pursuit by Bunbeer, and a peasant woman with a child disguised—as she would probably be—would attract no attention and be safe from most of the dangers of the wild and mountainous road.

Assa Sah received her and Sanga's son with the utmost kindness. But tradition has it that he, too, dreaded to incur Bunbeer's wrath and would have turned her away but for his mother, who bade him do his duty and guard Sanga's son. So Assa Sah gave them shelter in the fortress, but as an extra precaution it was arranged that the boy should be known as his nephew. One version of the story makes Panna leave him, as in such an assumed relationship he could not have a Rajput nurse. It is more likely that the faithful woman remained with the child for whom she had made so amazingly heroic a sacrifice. Sir Edwin Arnold makes her kill herself as soon as Udai Singh was in a place of safety ; but that is obviously a daring indulgence in picturesque fancy to add dramatic force to a story surely already dramatic enough.

Udai Singh lived till he was thirteen at Koniulmer, attracting no outside attention at first. Tradition does not explain how Bunbeer pacified the chieftains and persuaded them to condone his double murder. Possibly, believing no son of Sanga to survive, they made the best of a bad bargain ; and a very

bad one the regent usurper proved himself. Having waded "through slaughter to a throne," his mask of modesty was removed and the nobles found that they had given themselves an overlord as arrogant and discourteous as Bikramjit. They had the added chagrin of having to bear affronts from a man who had not the latter's pure birth. Matters went from bad to worse. Bunbeer treated even the highest of the chieftains with a contempt which soon caused widespread disaffection. "Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first send mad," and the upstart behaved with a recklessness which seems really insane when one remembers the source of his power. Especially did he give offence by his insistence on a custom by which at state dinners the Rana sent food from his own plate to those whom he desired to honour. This custom was governed by the strictest rules and the distinction could only be conferred on nobles of the highest rank. It was a gross affront to bestow it on an inferior in the presence of his superior. So exalted was the position of the Rana of Mewar in Rajasthan that it was considered a high honour and a proof of his legitimacy that a Rajput prince should eat off the same plate as he who sat in Bappa Rawul's seat. Deeply did the Chiefs resent Bunbeer's revival of the custom. The lesser ones were afraid to make open protest, but when the Rana sent food to the Chondawut chieftain, that prince refused

it with the daring comment:—"An honour from the hand of a legitimate descendant of Bappa Rawul is an insult from the hand of the son of a bondmaiden."

While matters were thus ripening for open rebellion at Chitore, the secret of Udai Singh's identity was suddenly disclosed. As the child grew, he developed a haughtiness of manner and speech which would have been quite out of keeping in a nephew of Assa Sah. This fact attracted the attention of those Rajputs who came as guests to the fortress. The actual disclosure of the boy's rank is related to have been due to the shrewdness of the Sonigurra Chief. Noticing the lad's haughty manner and princely dignity, he told Assa Sah abruptly that this was no nephew of his and demanded to know who the youth really was. Thus challenged, Assa Sah told his story and Panna was summoned to confirm it. It was glad news indeed to the lord of Sonigurra, and quickly the chieftains and nobles were summoned to Komulmer to see Udai Singh. One and all, burning with hatred and contempt for the upstart whose insults they had borne for seven years, obeyed the call. In full assembly Panna told her tale of loyalty, the *teeka* mark was placed on the boy's forehead, and all the nobles made obeisance before him.

Immediately the whole country was in arms for the son of Sanga. The senior noble, lord of the Chohan clan, was declared his

guardian; while the daughter of the Sonigurra Chief was wedded to him. There was some opposition to this union, for Sonigurra was a descendant of Maldeo who had so tricked Rana Hamir that the latter had solemnly cursed any of his line who should marry Maldeo's descendants. But that was more than two centuries past, and the power of Sonigurra was so great that all resistance to the marriage was overcome. Bunbeer, with only one or two of the minor Chiefs loyal to him, gathered his troops to attack Komulmer. But the cry of "Udai Singh, our lawful sovereign, Sanga's son," was too much for the army which melted away, and the usurper had barely time to retreat into Chitore before the array of the chieftains, with the boy sovereign in its midst, marched to the gates. Desperate and with much of the spirit of his father in him, Bunbeer prepared to sustain a long siege. But he was betrayed by one of his ministers who admitted into the city a thousand armed men concealed in carts supposed to contain food-stuffs. These soldiers, leaping out, put the garrison to the sword, threw open the gates and welcomed Udai Singh to his capital. Bunbeer was allowed to escape and lived his life out in obscurity in the Deccan.

THE THIRD SACK OF CHITORE.

HIS signal triumph over Bahadur Shah and his assumption of the overlordship of Mewar gave Humayun an opportunity to consolidate his empire which his father would have been quick to seize. But his was an extraordinary nature, and resolution and action were ever succeeded by weakness and indolence. In the story of the second sack of Chitore we have seen how he hesitated at the moment when he might have saved that sacred city and put all Rajasthan in his debt, gaining an alliance which would have rendered his position in India secure. Bound to the service of the Rani Karnavati by a time-hallowed chivalrous custom, he had failed her without reason, even after he had left a half finished campaign in Bengal to march to her aid. From this characteristic exhibition of irresolution dire misfortune was indirectly to overtake him. He had lost the golden opportunity of winning the Rajput princes to his support. Within a few years of the day when he buckled the sword of state around his vassal *protégé* Bikramjit in the desolate palace hall of Chitore, he was fated to wander in Rajputana a hunted man. In those weary days he craved from that country's proud princes the refuge and help which but for his vacillation and faithlessness he might well have commanded.

The stern self-restraint and fixity of purpose which are the essentials in the nature of a great conqueror and ruler were entirely lacking in Humayun. His subjugation of Bahadur Shah, and incidentally of the leading Rajput State, was followed by a period of feeble rule and a life of sensual self-indulgence which encouraged the turbulent Afghans to revolt. Within a few years of the sack of Chitore the empire was a chaos of feuds and petty revolts. To deal with these Humayun turned aside from his feasting and love-making for a while, only to return with greater zest to his life of idleness as soon as his task of quelling the rebellious was but half finished. These years of alternate action and inaction led up to the serious outbreak of Sher Khan, an Afghan Chief who invaded and laid waste Bengal. The Emperor, now thoroughly roused from his palace joys, gathered his forces and started out to punish the rebel. Behind him as he marched re-appeared Bahadur Shah who had but awaited his chance to reassert his authority in Malwa and Gujarat, where Humayun had done practically nothing to consolidate his power.

Sher Khan was astute enough to know that the Emperor was his own worst enemy and that he could be trusted to ruin his own campaign if he were but given enough of the rope of seeming victory. Therefore, as the imperial army advanced, he fell back as if

afraid to offer battle. Humayun, flushed with this easy triumph, occupied Bengal. Possessing himself of its chief cities, he surrendered to his impulse for enjoyment, devoting his days to "jollity and sensual pursuits." This the adroit Sher Khan had foreseen. While the Emperor feasted, he marched round him and got astride of his line of communications, thus cutting off all his supplies. The predicament in which Humayun was thus placed was the signal for a domestic revolt. One of his brothers proclaimed himself Emperor at Agra, where civil war at once broke out. Then another brother succeeded in deposing the usurper ; but he made no effort to attack Sher Khan or to rescue the Emperor. The latter's position, thus cut off from his capital, rapidly became untenable and he opened negotiations with the Afghans. An armistice was arranged ; but, while the discussion of terms was taking place, the treacherous Sher Khan made a surprise attack by night upon the imperial camp and massacred the majority of the soldiers as they slept. Humayun managed to escape by throwing himself into the Ganges where he would have perished but for the timely aid of a *bhisti* who floated him across the river on his *mashk*.

Reaching Delhi, he restored order for a time, reasserting his authority over his rebellious brothers. But Sher Khan had now re-occupied Bengal and was growing bolder with every

month. It became necessary for Humayun to fight for his throne. An army of some hundred thousand men was collected; but there was disaffection among the troops. The Emperor's prestige was gone and his flaccid rule had had the inevitable result. Near Kanauj he met with complete defeat at Sher Khan's hands, his army fleeing almost at the first attack. Humayun became a wanderer, a king without a court, lacking at times even shelter from the weather for himself and those few who were loyal to him in his misery.

History, indeed, can show few contrasts of fortune more vivid and amazing than those occurring in the life of the Emperor Humayun. Born in splendour, the favourite son of the conqueror of India, heir to the glories of the house of Timur, he was driven from Delhi a beggar. So hunted and scorned was he that it might more truly have been said of him than of Cæsar that there was "no man so mean to do him reverence." There were those who "did him reverence," whose loyalty never wavered, but they were those who were powerless to help him. Those who could have succoured him would not, and very naturally. He had sown the wind of scorn and faithlessness, and now he reaped the whirlwind of contempt and vindictiveness. The great Mogul wandered a pauper and an outcast in the deserts and jungles of Rajputana and Sind, appealing first to one and then to another of the princes for that

welcome and support which none were willing to give. Their castle gates were closed against him; their hearts were steeled by memory of his betrayal of Chitore. The Rajput hatred of the Muslim was exaggerated into a triumphant inhospitality and persecution in the case of a prince who had by his fatal vacillation lost the opportunity of binding them to him by the only lasting ties—those of faith kept and service rendered. The clouds had gathered inky black and lowering around the heir of Timurlane, The Terrible; and now the storm had broken. Hopeless and homeless he cried for help; hungry and thirsty, he lived as the beasts in caves or in mountain passes, with none to give him food or drink. Nations and lands have their destinies. Such reverses of fortune as Humayun suffered, such obstinate animosity as he and the Rajputs showed each other are the fated means, it must seem, by which races and peoples pass from age to age of development. • Had the Rajput princes “known the things that belonged unto their peace” they would have shown their traditional hospitality to the fallen Emperor. They would have forgotten their caste pride in the shrewd statesmanship which the relief of the prince would have been for Rajasthan. But they were blind in their hatred and scorn. Let the lord of the Muslims wander in his abject poverty. He had richly earned his misfortunes. So might all perish who crossed

the path of the proud *Kshatriyas* ! And the Rao Maldeo of Marwar, in response to Humayun's pitiful appeal, sent horsemen to hunt him down and kill or capture him.

Broken-hearted the miserable fugitive, with a handful of followers, took to the desert as his only refuge. He had to face his end in that ocean of burning sand—"the region of death," or by the flashing *talwars* of the Rao's troops. But time was to have its proverbial revenge. With him he bore away in his flight his young wife Hamida Begam, the daughter of a holy sheikh. She had come to him in his sorrows and the fruit of their love which lay then in her womb—for she was heavy with child—was to restore the glories of his House. Through that calvary of want, that pilgrimage of woe across the scorching desert she was to pass to the pride and happiness of giving birth to "the noblest king that ever ruled in India." Painfully and sorrowfully the mother of Akbar the Great was lifted on to her camel, while the fierce horsemen of the Rao buckled tight their girths and looked to the sharpening of their swords. Thus is history made. Thus is a country's destiny fulfilled.

Humayun's chronicler tells the horrors of that flight of sorrow, that pursuit of short-sighted hatred. He writes :—"Humayun mounted his horse at midnight and fled towards Amarkot. His horse on the way falling down dead with fatigue, he desired

Tardi Beg, who was well mounted, to let him have his. But so ungenerous was this man, and so low was royalty fallen, that he refused to comply with his request. The troops of the Rao Maldeo being close to his heels, he was necessitated to mount a camel, till one Nidim Kola, dismounting his own mother, gave the king her horse, and placing her on the camel, ran himself on foot by her side." . . . "The country through which they fled being an entire desert of sand, the Moghuls were in the utmost distress for water. Some ran mad, others fell down dead. Nothing was heard but dreadful screams and lamentations. To add, if possible, to this calamity news arrived of the enemy's near approach. Humayun ordered all those who could fight to halt, and let the women and the baggage move forward. The enemy not making their appearance, the king rode on in front to see how it fared with his family.

"Night in the meantime coming on, the rear lost their way and in the morning were attacked by a party of the enemy, whom they defeated, killing the leader and capturing horses and camels. For three whole days there was no water. On the fourth they came to a well, which was so deep that a drum was beaten to give notice to the man driving the bullocks that the bucket had reached the bottom. The people were so impatient for the water that, so soon as the first bucket appeared,

ten or twelve of them threw themselves upon it before it quite reached the brim of the well, by which means the rope broke and the bucket was lost, and several fell headlong after it. . . . Some, lolling out their tongues, rolled themselves in agony on the hot sand ; while others, precipitating themselves into the well, met with an immediate, and consequently an easier death. . . . The next day, though they reached water, was not less fatal than the former. The camels, which had not tasted water for several days, now drank so much that the greatest part of them died. The people also, after drinking, complained of an oppression of the heart, and in about half an hour a great part of them expired. A few, with the king, reached Amarkot."

At Amarkot the rajah gave the forlorn monarch and his starving followers the first welcome they had had in their wanderings, and "spared nothing that could alleviate their miseries or express his fidelity to the king." It was an oasis in the "region of death," one of "the nine castles" of that waste of sand, a brick fort bastioned with stone and surrounded by small houses and huts. Water there was in plenty and to the famished band it must have seemed an earthly paradise. There Humayun found permanent refuge and there in November 1542 Hamida Begam fulfilled her destiny and became the mother of Muhammad Jallal-ud-din

famous in history as Akbar. With the birth of his wonderful son the storm of Humayun's misfortunes abated. Happy in the knowledge that his beloved wife and child were safe in the desert fastness, the Emperor took heart and exhibited that courage and persistence under adversity which were reminiscent of his great father. Gathering a small army he advanced against Kandahar and Kabul, his family home. With some help from the Shah of Persia, at whose court he lived for a time, he regained them. Thereafter the sun of prosperity broke through the clouds and the rest of his chequered reign was a record of success. His turbulent and disloyal brothers died. Sher Khan, who had established a strong government at Delhi, having met his death on the battlefield, the empire fell into the hands of those who were unable to hold it together. Revolts broke out; and Humayun, as had Babar before him, marched from Kabul, made himself master of the Punjab, and re-mounted the throne of Delhi which his son was fated to surround with such undying glory. But it was the golden sunset of Humayun's life. Within six months of his restoration, he slipped on the marble steps of his palace and, falling over the balustrade into the court below, was killed. As has been wittily written, "he tumbled through life and he tumbled out of it."

The new master of Delhi was only thirteen when he succeeded to the throne, but he soon

showed that he was no ordinary boy. The man who has been described as "not only the greatest of the Great Moghuls but pre-eminent above all his pre-eminent contemporaries in Europe, and an ornament and pride not only of Islam but of the human race" was a conqueror almost in his teens. He early showed, too, that genius for administration which was to earn his reign of forty-nine years the name of India's "golden age." Masterful and ambitious, he was yet moderate and far-sighted. Tolerant and free of petty prejudice, he respected the Hindu religion and promoted its followers to some of the highest posts in the Empire. He knew the hearts of men and how to win even from traditional foes a loyalty of service which was a tribute to his genius as a ruler. He would brook no resistance ; but, once his supremacy was acknowledged, he could exhibit a generosity that was rare in his age and has indeed had few parallels in human history. Too wise to make war on caste rules, he sought by judicious reforms to break down the social barriers which weakened the unity of his dominions. He abolished the tax on Hindu pilgrimages and the faith tax on unbelievers, the hated *jazia*. He forbade compulsory *suttee* and encouraged the re-marriage of Hindu widows. To the Rajput States which submitted to him he permitted complete autonomy, and he won the loyalty of his vassals and the hostile criticism of many fanatical

Muslims by his steadfast fostering of the faith and national genius of Hindu India.

Such was the man with whom the Rajputs had now to measure swords. The result was not long in doubt. On the 5th November, 1566, in "the third battle of Panipat" the imperial forces under Beiram Khan, his faithful guardian and great general, utterly defeated the Afghans, and Akbar was thus free to devote the next six years to the subjugation of the Rajput princes. He invaded Marwar and signally defeated the Rao Maldeo. This was the lesson that some of the weaker Chiefs needed, and the Emperor received the submission of the Raja Bihari Mal of Amber (Jaipur), who added to his docility by giving him a daughter in marriage. Akbar was not bent on wars of devastation. He sought not to stamp out the Rajputs but to bend them to his will and then to utilise their abilities as subjects and to minimise the social separation between Muslims and Hindus. It was in pursuance of this latter policy that he sought to take their princesses as wives, and on the submission of Jodhpur the Rao Udai Singh gave him his sister Jodha Bai. The former policy he most successfully exemplified by his employment of such men as Raja Man Singh of the reigning family of Jaipur and Todar Mal, another Kshatriya, as generals—the latter being also a great financier and one of the most trusted of Akbar's ministers.

Partly through fear or rather their sense of powerlessness before such a foe, partly no doubt influenced, too, by the friendlier feelings towards the Muslims engendered by his tolerance and kindliness, the smaller Rajput princes made their submission to Delhi. But Rajput public opinion upon the marriage question ran high, and contempt and resentment were widely felt towards the royal houses of Jaipur and Jodhpur who had fallen so low that they were content to see their maidens enter the harem of the alien. Foremost among the recalcitrants were the people of Mewar. Their Rana was no hero to lead them in their splendid scorn, in that last effort of resistance to the Master of India, as futile to oppose him as a cage of slender bamboos to hold a tiger. Udai Singh, for whom such rivers of noble Rajput blood had been spilled, round whom the Chiefs had rallied and whom they had restored in triumph, seems to have been more than merely sensual and lethargic. By the desertion of his people in their hour of trial he proved himself actually a coward. There appears to be no record of his ever showing a particle of those high qualities which had distinguished his father and the line of Bappa Rawul. But in his sullen stupid way he felt a deep resentment at the dishonour that his brother princes were doing themselves by allying their blood with the House of Timur, and in Chitore he kept court, tacitly

defying and ignoring Delhi. This contemptuous attitude of indifference was just what was calculated to arouse the anger of the imperious Akbar. He marched upon Mewar, making his excuse the fact that Udai Singh had had the temerity to give refuge to Baz Bahadur, the Afghan ruler of Malwa, who had been expelled from that country by the Emperor.

Udai Singh was completely under the influence of a mistress, whose love filled his life. The girl appears to have been possessed of other qualities than those characteristic of a courtesan. Akbar marched on the city, laying waste the state, and the Rana in his pleasure-house lived on unmoved by the sufferings of his people and the danger to his throne. But ashamed of her royal lover's apathy, she defied Rajput etiquette and, armed and mounted, led attacks upon the imperial camp. It seems doubtful how far she succeeded in her desperate courage, but Rajput legend claims that she did at least once lead the troops to Akbar's headquarters. Certain it is that the imperial armies were for the time withdrawn, bag and baggage. The Mahomedan records give no details of this apparent reverse to Akbar; but it is suggested that he had to turn aside from the proposed siege of Chitore owing to an outbreak elsewhere.

If there is historical doubt, there was none in the mind of the infatuated Rana. He

declared that he owed the rescue of his kingdom to his mistress. So infuriated were the nobles at this insulting slight of their defence of the city that they had the poor woman, whose patriotic courage and devotion to her unmanly lover deserved a kindlier fate, killed. One would have thought that this outrage would have provoked Udai Singh to action, that he would have attempted at least to have avenged the death of the woman whose love had so filled his days. He listlessly acquiesced in the murder, and when in the next year (1567) Akbar returned with a large army and his guns and engineers, intent on reducing the town, he fled to the Aravalli hills, leaving the defence of his capital to Jainul, the Chief of Bednore.

The task before Akbar was no light one. The natural defences of Chitore were immense and, despite his skilled engineers and elaborate siege machinery, there were those in the Muslim host who doubted if the city could be taken. One of the Moghul historians records the impression made on the minds of those who saw the siege: "The castle," he writes, "is situated in the midst of a level plain which has no other hills. The mountain is twelve miles round at the base and nearly six at the summit. On the east and north it is faced with hard stone, and the garrison had no fears on those sides. Nor could guns, swivels, stone slings, nor mangonels do much damage on the other sides, if they managed to reach them.

Travellers do not mention any fortress like this in all the world. The whole summit was crowded with buildings, some several stories high, and the battlements were strongly guarded and the magazines full." The Chitore which resisted Akbar was a very different one from that which confronted Ala-ud-din in his first attempt and which cost him so dear in his successful second siege, and even from that of the days of Bahadur Shah. The scorn and anger with which the proposal of Bikramjit to adopt firearms and cannon had been received were dead and gone. The Rajput troops who manned the ramparts of the mountain city had ammunition and guns in plenty.

But, if many of his followers had doubts as to the issue, these were not shared by the indomitable Emperor, who "sat down" in front of Chitore resolved to reduce it at all costs. To its aid had come the Rajput chieftains and with them many thousands of the finest fighters of Rajasthan. Age and youth met in that chivalrous union. Jaimul of Bednore, a grizzled warrior of Marwar blood, stood to arms by the sixteen-year-old Putta of Kailwa, of the clan of Chondawut. The head of that clan had the hereditary privilege of ruling the state in the Rana's absence and defending "the gate of the sun." Scores of chiefs and nobles brought their followers within the walls. If the cowardly Rana had not spirit enough to strike a blow

for his kingdom, there were those in plenty who would sell their lives dearly in its defence.

Akbar's camp lay some way off, his headquarters being distinguished by a stone pillar from the top of which a cresset of resinous wood blazed nightly. Slowly he enveloped the doomed town, digging trenches in ever decreasing circles and burrowing from these beneath the walls to lay his mines. He adopted the tactics of Ala-ud-din but on a more extended and scientific scale, building covered ways almost to the foot of the hill. These ended in mounds which were piled higher and higher till they commanded the interior of the fortress at several points. In this work the attackers suffered heavily, for they were exposed day and night to the slings and guns of the defenders who fired by the light of countless torches when night fell. Scores of the Muslims were daily killed or maimed. Behind their bodies as barricades their comrades toiled on, encouraged to their work by the lavish gifts of the Emperor who knew how to be generous at such critical times.

Slowly but surely the science of the attack told. Gap after gap was made in the fortifications by the explosion of mines, in which the bodies of Rajput and Muslim were blown into indiscriminate pieces. More and more completely were the streets of the city commanded by the mounds, Akbar placing thereon his

larger cannon on wooden platforms behind sharply sloped earthworks. Each day the garrison lost many chivalrous defenders and the hopes of beating off and tiring out the Muslims became fainter and fainter. The chief of the Chondawuts was blown to fragments in "the gate of the sun," and his vice-regency fell upon the lad Putta, who had but just married. He might readily have been pardoned if he had hesitated to tear himself from the arms of his lovely young bride to face the enemies of his country. But in that supreme hour there was no thought of self. Within the devoted town there were none who showed the cowardice of their ruler, secure in the Aravalli hills. Putta's mother and his girl-wife armed themselves and fell fighting by his side, as had the Queen-mother Jawahir Bai in the second siege of the city in the midst of her son's troops.

It was courage, desperate and reckless, pitted against science and method directed by a master-mind. The Chiefs were killed off; the breaches in the walls grew larger and harder to defend; and the silent figure of the Emperor paced the mounds at night, gazing, as a mariner at the distant light of his port, at the red glare of the swaying torches on the ramparts of the beleaguered town. Sometimes he would himself direct the artillery fire and with his favourite gun "Singram" bombard a weak spot. It is related that just before the

doomed city fell he managed thus to kill Jaimul of Bednore, almost the last leader of eminence left, whom he discerned on the ramparts silhouetted on a background of torchlight.

The end had come. Further struggle was futile. Their stores were exhausted, and the famished men were no longer in numbers sufficient to hold back the enemy as they pressed forward through all the yawning chasms in the walls. Chitore must fall, but it should be as befitted the dignity of a royal and holy city. From the plain Akbar and his troops saw column after column of pitchy smoke ascending, and then the black pall became of a sudden veined with flames which shot higher and higher till it seemed as if the whole mountain were ablaze. For the third and last time Chitore was making the supreme sacrifice. Rajput chastity was triumphing in those crackling leaping flames. Princess or peasant, no woman of Mewar would submit herself to the hated "Toork." Akbar saw and leapt to horse. He would have spared the people; he would have pledged the women's safety; he desired victory, not extermination. But it was too late. As the Muslims rode forward, they were met by an avalanche of horsemen, shouting fierce cries, drunk with opium and despair. They asked no quarter and they gave none. Above them, behind the broken gaping battlements and ramparts,

roared the funeral flames of those dearest in life to them. The honour of those precious bodies was safe. Their own honour lay ahead,—to spear and hack and stab till horse could not stand in the mire of slaughter, till sword hilt and spear butt were too slippery with blood to be longer held. Chitore was dying. The night of Rajput chivalry had come; but it was a night of glory. As those fierce soldiers slew their way to death, the flames far above flickered lower and lower over the white bones of wife and mother and daughter. Chitore was dead. On the morrow in triumph the Great Moghul entered a cemetery.

THE BATTLE OF HALDIGHAT.

BEFORE Akbar returned to Delhi he received the surrender of Mewar's next greatest fortress Ranthambhor. He could not reach the cowardly Rana who hid in the hills, unperturbed by the fate of Chitore; but he was determined that Mewar should learn her lesson. The mountain city was ransacked and destroyed, and the army, loaded with loot, marched on Ranthambhor. This, a dependency of Mewar, was part of the dominions of the Rao of Boondi, Soorjun, son of Rao Arjuna who was blown to pieces by one of Bahadur Shah's mines during the second sack of Chitore. It was the strategic key to the whole country and Akbar "sat down" before it. A siege as methodical as that of Chitore was begun; but the fortress was very strong and well provisioned and its reduction would have taken many weeks. This delay the Emperor could not afford. He had been absent from his capital for some time and it was imperative for him to return as soon as possible. It was therefore determined to attempt to capture the fortress by stratagem. The plot was hatched and carried out by two Rajput vassals of Akbar.—Bhagwan Das, Rajah of Amber and his nephew Raja Man Singh. They sent a message to Soorjun suggesting an armistice and a conference to discuss terms. The Rao agreed to

receive a deputation, and Raja Man Singh with his attendants was admitted into Ranthambhor and received with dignified hospitality by Soorjun and his retainers. Among his followers was the Emperor himself disguised as the Chief's mace-bearer. At a given signal the treacherous Rajput rose and, turning to the latter who stood behind his chair, took the mace from his hand and, bowing profoundly, handed him into the chair of state on the dais from which the Rao had stepped down to greet his guest. A moment of amazement at the impertinence was instantly succeeded by consternation when the Rao and his court realised that a trick had been played on them and that Akbar himself was enthroned in the palace hall. The chivalrous Rajputs, even thus duped, could not forget the sanctity of a guest. Their hands, which had gone with lightning movement to their sword hilts, dropped again to their sides in obedience to a rule the breach of which even such treachery as Raja Man Singh's could not condone. For a minute or two there was a confused silence. Akbar alone was undismayed and gazed at the bewildered chieftains with that "godlike dignity" for which he was renowned. At last he turned to the Rao and said: "Rao Soorjun, you did not expect such an envoy. What is your answer?" Soorjun was silent, but the traitor, Raja Man Singh, expressed the thought that was in the minds of most present, when he

said : " Let there be an end of strife. Make terms. The Emperor is ever generous."

And so it was. Soorjun, entertaining his enemy unawares, agreed to surrender the fortress and become vassal of Delhi.' Akbar's terms were indeed generous. The Rao was to be left in complete independence, ruler of fifty-two districts. If it were demanded, he must send his contingent to the imperial army ; but the poll-tax should not be levied within Boondi and no chieftain of the state could be summoned to service beyond the Indus. Moreover, the Emperor pledged himself not to compel the surrender to the imperial harem of any princess of the Rao's house whose princes might enter the audience fully armed and would not be expected to make the prostration before the throne.

This ignominious surrender of Ranthambhor would have been scarcely possible, had Udai Singh been such a man as his father. But, worthy as his son Pertap was to prove, he himself was so unlike Sanga that it was difficult to believe that Panna's story was true and that the child rescued from the murderous steel of Bunbeer was fruit of the loins of "the lion of battle." Had the Rana been a man to inspire loyalty, an effort might have been made even then to check the decadence of Rajasthan. But he skulked in the mountains, and the astute Akbar knew how to sow seeds of dissension among the princes.

He tempted the greed, humiliated the arrogance and soothed the chivalrous pride of them according to their natures. His shrewd statesmanship was acting as a solvent of Rajput unity; his marriages with their princesses and his indulgence towards their national life and religion disarmed hostility and invited to a venal docility. Thus it was that no Chief raised his voice against Soorjun's submission save Sawant Hara, who had won back Ranthambhor for the Rana from the Afghans in Humayun's days. His protest, backed as it was by merely a handful of retainers, was futile. But he would have no part or lot in the treasonable cession, and he rallied his men for a final sally on the Muslims. Before he donned the saffron robe of the desperate Rajput, he had a pillar engraved with a curse "upon whatever Hara of gentle blood should ascend the castle of Ranthambhor or should quit it alive." Then he led his followers to the gate and, charging upon the Islamic troops, they were cut down to the last man. Thenceforward no Hara would ever pass Ranthambhor save in shame with averted eyes.

With the surrender of the fortress Akbar's object was attained. He returned to Delhi, leaving a submissive and desolate Rajasthan behind him. Those who would hearken to his seductive pipings and would take the good things of the world from his hands were loaded with honours and gratified with a

fictitious independence. Those who resisted him were mercilessly crushed. For the craven Udai Singh he felt, no doubt, nothing but the contempt of the masterful man for the weak one. Such a prince could be left 'to his own devices, and for the four remaining years of the Rana's life there was peace. Udai Singh, gaining confidence from Akbar's indifference, came down from the mountains and built the palace and the beginnings of what is now the city of Udaipur, which he so named after himself.

To the Rana had been born no less than five and twenty sons. The eldest, Pertap, was the child of the daughter of the Sonigurra Chief, descendant of Maldeo who had tricked Rana Hamir into marriage with his widowed daughter. For him his father had little affection and he had designated a younger, Jugmal, his heir. A still younger one, Sukta, he had ordered to be killed, but his life was spared in the following circumstances. When he was born the Brahmins who were employed to cast his horoscope declared that the conjunction of the stars foreshadowed evil and that the baby prince would grow to be a curse to the House of Bappa Rawul. Udai Singh, intensely superstitious as are most weak natures, conceived a dislike for the boy and a slight incident gave him the occasion to issue the unnatural order for his execution. One day in his fifth year he was playing near his

father when a jewelled dagger of rare temper and fine workmanship was brought to the king for his approval. Taking it, the Rana tested it on a roll of cloth. Sukta, watching him, said : "Daggers should cut flesh, not cotton," and, snatching the weapon from his father, he stabbed his own hand to the bone, without flinching or giving so much as a cry. The wound bled freely ; and Udai Singh, mindful of the Brahmins' warning, saw in the child an embryo assassin and called the attendants, bidding them strangle the boy. As the baby prince was being carried struggling through the palace, the Chief of the Chondawut clan met the mournful procession. On hearing with amazement of the horrible order, he bade the only too willing guards wait awhile and, making his way into the presence of the Rana, he begged for the child's life : "I have no sons. Let me have him and he shall be Chief of the clan in the years to come." His first horror at the child's cold-blooded act having passed, Udai Singh repented of his brutal order and granted the Chief's request. Sukta was taken to his castle and reared as heir to the Chondawut chieftainship, which he was fated never to hold.

As he lay dying, Udai Singh, surrounded by the chieftains, expressed his wish that his favourite son Jugmal should succeed him. The nobles listened in silence, but there were those who were resolved that Pertap should

not be thus cheated of his inheritance. Foremost of these was the Sonigurra Chief, his uncle. No sooner was the Rana dead and his body given over into the hands of the Brahmins who, according to custom, were charged with the funeral arrangements, than he took counsel with the head of the Chondawuts. When rebuked for his apparent acquiescence in Udai Singh's injustice, that Chief retorted : " When a sick man in his last moments asks for milk, why refuse it ! " And he then assured his brother chieftain that he was resolved to support Pertap's claim, if need be by force. The two determined forthwith to execute a *coup d'état* at the enthronement of Jugmal, for which elaborate preparations were going forward. Pertap, mistaking the silence of the Chiefs as proof that he had no friends and that his father's unjust decision was approved, got ready to escape from the state : for it was certain that his brother, once on the *gadi*, would not tolerate his presence at court. But his uncle bade him wait, and he attended in the palace hall when Jugmal in his coronation robes presented himself before his nobles to be publicly acclaimed Rana. When he strode forward to take his seat beneath the crimson banner with its golden sun centre, the lord of the Chondawuts, whose duty it was to gird him with the sword of Bappa Rawul, laid a firm hand on his arm. " Prince, this," indicating a cushion by the throne, " is your

place" he said. "Your brother is lord of Mewar." The amazed Jugmal glanced angrily around, but the nobles stood silent and sullen. When in response to his kinsman's call Pertap came forward and was girt with the state sword, a sudden shout of approval rang through the assembly. Eagerly the chieftains pressed forward, in imitation of the Chondawut lord, to make their obeisance before Pertap who had seated himself on the *gadi*. Thus was justice done and the rightful heir was installed as "the Sun of the Hindus."

The dignity and self-restraint with which Pertap accepted his changed fortunes were auguries of the courage and self-denial with which he was to struggle for years to uphold the honour and restore the independence of Rajasthan. His was a heritage barren of power and domination, rich only in the glories of the past. Rana only in name, he began his titular reign a fugitive, and he was fated to spend a life of wandering and strife in a futile struggle against the overwhelming power of Delhi. And not only that. The princes of Rajasthan and his own flesh and blood were his foes. Marwar, Boondi, Amber, Bikanir had submitted to Akbar : his brother Sugra was a traitor, accepting lands and honours from the Emperor. His country had been laid waste, his subjects scattered or fearful. • It was a prospect so desperate that it would have cowed any but an heroic nature. Undismayed, he

measured the cost and plunged into a strife which was to have for him no ending save death. If resolution and courage could win back the glories of his realm, he, vowed to do it. If not, he would live in revolt, defying a power to which he was too proud to yield. Gathering such troops as he could, he made his court at the fortress of Komulmer, where his grand-uncle Prithi Raj, a man of the mettle of Bappa Rawul as was he, had won such fame. The splendid palace at Udaipur was no home for a prince whose life was to be dedicated to war and hardship. He felt that regal pomp and luxury ill became a king at bay, and he ordered his life in keeping with his fate. Thenceforward he would live frugally as a soldier should. The gorgeous gold and silver plates of the palace were buried and his dish was a leaf plucked in the jungle. The costly couch with its silken hangings was no bed for him ; he and his followers would sleep on straw till he fought his way back to the Chitore of his ancestors, a Rana in more than name. Never again would he or his trim and curl their beards in Rajput fashion until he came into his own. Vowing to restore his country's glories or die, he prepared for a life of self-denial. If he could not conquer Akbar, he could at least teach him that a Rajput knew how to endure to the end.

When he had taken up his residence at Komulmer, he bade his brother Sukta come to

him. The latter had grown now into a goodly young man, as brave and reckless as Prithi Raj himself ; but he was no longer heir to the lordship of the Chondawuts, for to the old Chief late in life sons had been born. Thus Sukta was glad to join his brother whose life of warfare attracted him. But the two personalities were too masterful to harmonise, and soon the younger brother exhibited towards the elder something of the bitter jealousy that his prototype Prithi Raj had shown towards their grandfather. The dare-devil young prince even dreamed of ousting Pertap. Some idle sneer, some trifling words of disparagement repeated to the Rana, provoked a bitter scene between the brothers. At last the ungrateful Sukta demanded that there should be a trial by battle of their rival merits, that as in the manner of knights of the tournament they should decide by their spears who should be master.

Pertap, indignant at his brother's ingratitude and treachery, consented to fight him. Mounting their horses, they couched their spears. But even in that supreme moment the dignified courtesy of Rajput fighting was not overlooked ; and they hesitated, each inviting the other to charge and strike the first blow. Having decided to solve the difficulty by both charging at once, they had couched their lances and were just spurring their horses to the gallop when there appeared between them the chief Brahmin

priest of the court. He stood fearless, sternly rebuking them and calling upon them to cease from such fratricidal strife. But it was too late. Furious and excited, they started, to charge, when the holy man, resolved to prevent the duel, drew a dagger from his girdle and plunged it into his breast, penetrating to the heart. With a last appealing cry he fell dead, his life-blood soaking the ground which in another moment would have been trampled on by their horses' hoofs. Staggered by the suddenness of the tragedy, the princes reined in their horses. Over the sacred blood and the corpse neither dared ride. There was a moment of silence, and then the Rana spoke: "Brother, it is the will of heaven that we should not fight. You or I have been spared the sin of killing a brother. I have loved you and you have rewarded me by intrigue and ingratitude. Begone now from my court and I will strive to banish from my heart the loye I bore you and you so little deserve." Sukta had no word of appreciation for his brother's chivalrous forbearance. Wheeling his horse round, he rode from the ground and that night he started out for Delhi, where he became an honoured courtier.

This defection of yet another brother was a heavy blow to Pertap, but his resolve was not shaken. With his headquarters in the mountains, he began a systematic guerilla warfare against the troops which Akbar had

left as garrisons. He gave orders for the inhabitants of Mewar to leave their farms and to gather at Komulner. If he were not free to reign in his own dominions, others, at least, should not do so or win their sustenance from the fertile fields of "the garden of Rajasthan." Behind him, as he retired, he left desolation, and upon those bands of imperial troops which attempted to follow him or tried to establish outposts he descended unexpectedly, taking grim toll of their men, driving off their horses and cattle and plundering their caravans. All this came to the ears of Akbar and the natural generosity of his heart towards a gallant enemy was overborne by his indignation at such resistance to his power. Had he not shown himself a large-hearted and liberal conqueror? Had he not respected the sacred customs of the Rajputs and ordered that they should be permitted to follow the ritual of their faith unmolested even within the palace precincts? Had he not shown his freedom from the vulgar prejudice of race by conferring posts of honour and of the highest responsibility in his army and at his court upon the Hindus? And this fugitive Rana, with his insensate pride and futile hopes, dared to defy him and to harry and often decimate his troops. All Rajputana had acknowledged his power save this rebel warrior in his mountain fastness. Pondering wrathfully over his defiance, Akbar only awaited

the opportunity of again teaching Pertap the lesson that he thought his family would have learned from the sack of Chitore.

His chance soon came, though the Rana showed himself a dull and untutored pupil. Raja Man Singh, leading an imperial army back to Delhi after a campaign in a distant part of the Empire, had to march through Mewar. Renegade as he was, his Rajput blood was stirred at the heroic struggle of the Rana, and he desired to pay his respects to him. May be he had hopes that he might bring him to reason and put the Emperor more than ever in the debt of himself by ridding him of the perpetual and costly rebellion in Mewar. At any rate he sent a messenger to Komulmer asking if Pertap would receive him. The answer came back that the Rana would be pleased to greet him on the shore of the Udaipur lake. Thither rode the Raja, escorted by the Chiefs and his attendants. On his arrival he was welcomed by the Rana's eldest son, Umra, who had come to Udaipur with the nobles of Mewar. A feast was spread and the young prince invited Man Singh to eat, explaining that his father was ill unexpectedly and thus could not make the journey to Udaipur. Graciously as this excuse was made, all knew that it was a lie and no one better than the Rajah. "My Lord Prince, it ill becomes a guest to challenge the word of his host, but I must yours. Tell me the truth :

your father will not meet me : he bade me come here only to humiliate me. I will not taste of his food unless I sit at his right hand to do so." Hesitatingly the youth replied : " His Highness my august father has sworn that he will not eat with one whose sister has been given to a Muslim and who himself eats with the infidels." Thereat Man Singh rose in anger and called for his horse. As he sprang into the saddle, the Rana, who was in the palace grounds all the time, and to whom news of what was occurring had been taken, rode on to the ground. But he came not to make peace and Man Singh knew it. The two men looked in each other's eyes for a few seconds. The recreant Rajput almost quailed before the haughty stare of Pertap. Then, recovering himself, he made ironical obeisance, and his face livid with rage, said : " My lord, you are pleased to insult a guest. For this you shall pay a heavy price, I swear." The Rana, bowing with the coldest courtesy, retorted : " I am ever at your service, Raja." Whereat the latter, putting spurs to his horse, galloped off, followed by his furious attendants. •

The incident might have had no direct consequences, had it not been for the fact that one of Pertap's followers shouted to Man Singh, bidding him bring the Emperor with him when he came again, describing Akbar in grossly obscene terms. Then the Rana and his chieftains and courtiers bathed and changed

their clothes polluted by the recreant's presence. The very ground on which Man Singh and his attendants had rested was sprinkled with the sacred water of the Ganges. Meantime the Raja continued on his journey. When he reached Delhi after many days of travel, he lost no time in seeking an audience of Akbar to whom he related all that had occurred, not forgetting the final insult. The Emperor was naturally infuriated and gave instant orders for a strong army to march against Pertap. The troops were led by Prince Salim with Raja Man Singh as second in command. Advancing by forced marches, the vast array closed in upon Udaipur, shutting Pertap into a district of some eighty miles with the mountains in the rear. The country was a difficult one in which to manœuvre a large body of troops with artillery and the heavy field equipment of the imperial army. A battle ground where Prince Salim could utilise all his strength was hard to find. But by outflanking the Rana he forced him to give battle on the plain of Haldighat. Here, almost at the foot of the mountains around Komulmer, the fight took place in June 1576.

The odds were enormously against Pertap. With the sun banner borne behind him, he charged forward at the head of some twenty thousand horsemen. Three or four times that number mustered around the gorgeously

caparisoned war elephant upon which sat Prince Salim. Bitterest of all Pertap's thoughts, when he saw himself thus outnumbered, was the knowledge that in that host were his own kinsmen. 'His brothers Sukta and Sugra were there. Mahabat Khan, the latter's son, held a minor command, while Prince Salim himself was child of a Rajput princess. How could he hope to prevail against Akbar when the latter had such allies? For him and his gallant cavalry there was no help save from the woodland folk, the Bhils. Posted on the hills, overlooking the field of battle (for they were unaccustomed to plain fighting) they guarded the pass to Komulmer, hiding behind rocks and in thickets ready with poisoned arrows and stones. It was around the entrance to this defile, Pertap's sole line of retreat, that the battle raged hottest. In the dust and the turmoil, in the thickest of the swaying throng the Rana on his war horse "Chytuc" slew and slew, ever seeking to cut his way to where Man Singh rode beside the heir to the throne of Akbar. The courage of the Rajputs was irresistible, and at first it seemed as if the very numbers of the Muslims would be their undoing. The fight early became a hand to hand one. So inextricably mixed were the soldiers that the great guns and the matchlocks of the Muslims could not be used without danger to their own side. Pressing them back and ever back, the Rana rallied his bodyguard and charged down

upon the elephant of Prince Salim. A furious fight raged around the latter. The swords of the Rajputs swept off heads and lopped off arms till the huge animal was reached. The *mahout* was cut down and fell forward dead, his bleeding body dangling out of the *howdah*. Charging upon him, Pertap aimed a blow at the prince who in another instant must have been killed. But the elephant, maddened with the noise and shouts and by the wounds inflicted by a score of swords, stampeded through the crowd trampling horses and riders in his wild flight. Pertap by this time was bleeding from several wounds and his armour was pierced by a match-lock ball. His followers fought like fiends, but they had lost heavily and the superior numbers of their enemies began to tell. Towards the golden sun banner and the state umbrella the troops of Akbar pressed and the Rana's life was in the greatest danger. There was no time for thought or deference. The Jhala Chief wrenched the standard from the bearer and digging his spurs fiercely into his horse forced his way through the shouting, cursing mob. He was followed at once by the Muslims who believed that there beneath the crimson flag rode Pertap. The latter's devoted attendants saw and understood the trick. Some followed the dauntless lord of Jhala; while others, seizing the bridle of "Chytuc," guided their weakened, wearied sovereign towards the mountains.

The lord of Jhala had saved his king at the cost of his own life. But he sold that dearly. Around the sun banner raged a fight more fierce than any during that bloody day. The clash of sword and spear, the shouts and curses of men; the screams of horses in their death agonies rent the air. Surrounded by his devoted knights Jhala fought like a wounded tiger. The man to whom he had handed the standard was cut down, and the flag fell to the dusty ground. It was lifted again and held high, only to fall again and again to be snatched and waved aloft. But the day was lost. The Muslim troops came up line after line like human waves, till the frenzied band of Rajputs had been blotted out. The crimson and gold flag was trampled in the blood-soaked dust, the dying and dead piled up around it. And there the Chief fell. Unhorsed, his features smeared with blood and dust, his armour broken, his helmet gone, he stood at last to bay. Pierced and hacked with a score of spears and swords, his mutilated body lay across the Rana's banner, around him the corpses of those who had been the flower of the Rajput army. Of the twenty odd thousand who rode on to the field of Haldighat barely a third escaped that day of carnage.

Meanwhile Pertap, sick at heart, giddy and swaying in his saddle with the loss of blood from many wounds, fled towards Komulmer. The faithful few who galloped in rear of him

to cover his retreat were one by one overtaken and overpowered, till, as he entered the defile, he was alone. He spurred the exhausted "Chytuc" to fresh effort; he must live for Mewar, while those below on the corpse-littered plain must die for her. As he rode on he heard the clatter of hoofs. He turned and saw that he was pursued by two men whose horses, fresher than his, were gaining on him fast. Onward the path—it was little else—began to rise rapidly, more and more difficult for fast riding. But, unaccustomed to the mountains, his enemies found the sudden ascent harder than did he. Now he was gaining and, when he came to a torrent which foamed across the path, he leapt "Chytuc" across and turned to bay. But the two riders reined in their horses on the further bank. Pertap, seizing his chance, wheeled round and was off again, clattering up the mountain pass. He had not gone far when again he heard a horse, this time galloping. "Chytuc" could do no more and he himself felt that the moment to kill or be killed had come. He turned and, as his foe approached, he recognised his brother Sukta. Into that face he had not looked since the day of the interrupted duel. Now there was no holy man between them. If it must be, it should be, and he tightened his grip on his sword hilt. But Sukta, flinging himself from the saddle, cried : "Brother, put up thy sword. Slaughter

enough has there been this day. I come in peace. Yonder lie dead the lords of Khorasan and Mooltan who sought thy life. Take my horse ; thine own is dying. See." And even as he spoke the noble "Chytuc's" trembling legs and reeking flanks gave and he fell bearing the Rana down with him. Scrambling up, the weary man opened his arms to his brother, and the two held each other in a long embrace. Below the din of the dying battle came faintly to them. But they heard it not ; they had forgotten all in the joy of their reunion.

But it was no time to indulge in sentiment. Sukta must get back on foot to the battle ; Pertap must ride his horse swiftly to the security of Komulmer. Promising to rejoin him as soon as opportunity offered, Sukta descended to the plain. The evening had come, the battle was over. Knots of Rajput horsemen straggled towards the mountains ; while Akbar's troops, satisfied with their victory, ceased pursuit and marched back to their camp wearied and battle-stained. It was not till next day that Sukta reached Prince Salim's headquarters. His absence had been noted. He had been seen riding towards the mountains in the rear of the lords of Khorasan and Mooltan who had never returned, and the Emperor's heir demanded his story. Glibly he told it : how he had seen the trick played by the Jhala Chief and the Rana ride for his life ; how he had ridden in pursuit with the

lords of Khorasan and Mooltan ; how they had been killed by Pertap and he himself had been unhorsed and escaped back on foot. With something of the shrewdness of his father, Prince Salim saw through the tale and knew that Sukta lied. "Thou shalt not die, I swear, if thou speakest the truth." "Prince," replied the other, "he is my brother. He fled for his life."

Angrily Salim ordered him to leave his presence and placed him under arrest. When the army reached Delhi Sukta was taken before the Emperor. His life was in no danger, for Akbar was not a man to break his own or his son's word ; but he might have been imprisoned had the campaign disappointed the imperial hopes. As it was, rejoicing in his triumph and the thought that Pertap was finally crushed, Akbar was in a mood to be generous ; and haughtily he dismissed the Rajput prince, bidding him go and keep company with his ruined brother. Nothing loath, Sukta made his way to Mewar, and in the dare-devil spirit so reminiscent of Prithi Raj he gathered some horsemen on his way and surprised the fortress of Bhynsrar and took it from the Muslims for Mewar. The grateful Pertap granted that district to his brother, and Bhynsrar became the headquarters of the Suktawuts, as Saloombra was that of the Chondawuts. Sukta, who had seventeen sons, founded a clan of which the dearly prized motto was "the barrier

to Khorasan and Mooltan" in memory of the battle of Haldighat. For the Jhala clan there was honour, too, in memory of that field of slaughter, for ever afterwards each was entitled to be styled "Raj" and to have his drums beaten at the palace gates in memory of his ancestor's splendid courage.

RANA PERTAP.

AKBAR was fully justified in 'nursing the hope that he had at last done with Pertap. The losses of the Rajputs had been truly terrible, and a man of less resolution and courage than the Rana would have made his submission. Nothing was to be gained by further defiance ; as an honoured vassal of Delhi the reconstitution of his realm, wealth, high commands and the splendour and luxury of stately palace life awaited him. Small wonder then that after his smashing victory Prince Salim was recalled by his father. The rest, Akbar felt, could be left to time.

But he reckoned without the amazing pertinacity and spirit of his foe. Undismayed by the league of Rajput princes against him, the Rana took sullen refuge at Komulmer and prepared to renew those harassing tactics which were so irritating to the Emperor and so very hard to punish. Slowly the remnant of the Rajput army straggled back to the fortress until Pertap commanded a force of some ten thousand horse. The months of the rains were spent in recuperating and in strengthening the fortifications of his last stronghold. Then the Rana descended to the plains, surprised the Muslim garrisons and put them to the sword. The news was brought to Akbar

and, incensed and weary of the persistent rebel, he sent Prince Salim at the head of a considerable force to give Pertap the *coup de grace*. By skilful manœuvring, rendered possible by his very superior numbers, Prince Salim forced the Rajputs to a pitched battle. There again was enacted the futile heroism of Haldighat ; there again fearful toll was taken of Rajput chivalry ; and once more, wearied and wounded, their dauntless Chief had to fly the field, leaving his men to die in heaps to cover his retreat. But this time Akbar's orders were explicit. It was to be no half-finished campaign ; Pertap was to be driven to bay and the "royal rat" was to be dug out or killed in his hole. Salim advanced against Komulmer, harassed by the Bhils who garrisoned the passes and, hidden on the hills, took toll of the infidels with arrow and rock, as they struggled on. But numbers and equipment told and the imperial army at last lay outside Pertap's last refuge. So strong, however, were its natural fortifications and so skilfully had these been supplemented that Salim's task would have proved a long one, had it not been for treachery within the citadel. There it was discovered that the well had been polluted ; the water was undrinkable by Rajputs and suspicion fell upon the Sirohi Chief of Mount Abu, whose ancestor it was who had killed Prithi Raj with poisoned sweets. Without water Komulmer was untenable, and once again the

Rana had to fly for his life, leaving the garrison, led by the Sonigurra Chief, to sell their lives dearly at the opened gates of the fortress.

There was now no walled shelter or fort left to the Rana. Driven to the hills beyond Komulmer he had to live in the open, his bed the ground, his roof the matted boughs of the jungle, his food the fruits and leaves of the forest. All Mewar fell into the hands of the conquerors. Splitting their army into three under Salim, Raja Man Singh and Mahabat Khan, respectively, a systematic subjugation of the country was undertaken. The hapless Rajputs, a small and hopeless band, were harried and hunted as long as the weather conditions permitted. But the Rana's spirit was untamed. If all his fellow princes found solace in a venal docility to Delhi, he at least would maintain the highest traditions of Rajput pride and independence. The history of those years of defiance constitutes some of the noblest pages in Rajput annals. Aided by their knowledge of the mountainous country, the prince and his men hid in the impenetrable jungle, camping in the pathless wild. Disappearing for weeks, of a sudden they would emerge from the forests to attack some straggling rear-guard or cut off a convoy, only to vanish when fresh Muslim troops hurried up. Again and again Prince Salim and his generals thought they had surrounded Pertap: again and again were they

disappointed. Where they believed the Rajputs sheltered, none were to be found ; when they believed them miles away, they would hear suddenly the wild battle cry and, surprised into a huddled mob like frightened sheep, would lose half their men before the foe vanished as magically as they had appeared. It was a worn and starving court that the Rana kept in the haunts of the tiger and the bear ; but it was dignified by a loyalty and devotion as chivalrous and perfect as if he had been living the stately life of Chitore. All suffered alike, but no soldier forgot for a second that their unkempt and raggedly clothed leader was their sovereign, or wavered in an allegiance that was costing them so dear.

True to their traditional fidelity to the line of Bappa Rawul, the Bhils were allies of the utmost value to the Rana. They were the scouts--the eyes and ears--of his desperate band. The vanguard and rearguard of his party, they attacked and harried the enemy, led the starving to the rich hunting grounds, the thirsty to the forest-hidden rock-pools, and found plant food where other eyes could see naught but tangled weed or parched thorn thicket. Once they saved Pertap's children. The little ones and their mother shared his woodland life, and sometimes in a headlong flight they had to be left behind concealed in trees or caves. In bamboo or rush-woven cradles the children were hung from the boughs

at night to protect them against wild beasts, and even in recent times Rajputs would point out the rings and nails in the trees from which the babies hung. In one retreat it was impossible to take them with him, and Pertap entrusted them to the Bhils who hid them in baskets and took them down into the tin mines till the danger was past.

When Prince Salim withdrew the bulk of his troops at the beginning of the monsoon, it seemed indeed that the last remnant of serious opposition to Akbar's supremacy had been stamped out in Rajasthan. Pertap was helpless, a king without a throne or palace, a general without an army or a fortified base. And there was no other chieftain or prince of importance who had not become the Emperor's man. The shrewd policy of conciliation had been steadfastly adhered to and Akbar had his reward. The visits of the Rajput princes to pay homage were made the occasion of festivities; special camping grounds were assigned to them and their suites; every liberty and religious indulgence were granted them, and every honour shown. Among those received with marked distinction were the two sons of the chief of Bikanir, Rae Singh and Prithi Raj. They were men whose rank and fame as warriors made their submission most welcome, and Akbar mated Prince Salim with Rae Singh's daughter, and loaded Prithi Raj with honours.

Pertap maintained his hopeless struggle. Season after season he harried the Muslim troops who made futile efforts to capture or kill him. But, as the years passed, his health suffered and he lost heart, not so much on account of his own sufferings and deprivations as because his continued resistance inflicted such woes on those dear to him. If Rajput tradition is to be believed, this consideration alone influenced him at last to offer his submission to Akbar. One day the latter summoned Prithi Raj and in triumphant tones bade him read a letter from Pertap offering to surrender. Prithi Raj had not himself the hardihood and pride of race to withstand the material allurements with which the Emperor had contrived to buy the allegiance of all Rajasthan. But he had spirit and grace enough to hold the Rana in the deepest reverence for his dauntless unselfishness. He read the letter, but he did not believe that it was really Pertap who had written it. He replied indignantly: "My Lord, the Rana will never yield. He is not weak as we others are. He is a true son of Bappa Rawul. Give me leave to write to him before you do aught." And Akbar, who greatly admired a gallant foe, gave the permission, not desiring to take hasty advantage of what might be a fraudulent document or one inspired by a moment of weakness.

It was indeed in such a moment, overborne with sadness at the constant hardships that his

children suffered, that Pertap had written his humble appeal for pardon. He was in much the same mood when the messenger returned from Delhi, bringing him, as he believed, Akbar's acceptance of his submission. But it was not the Emperor who wrote but Prithi Raj. He appealed to the noblest of the Rajputs then living as follows : "The hopes of the Hindu rest on the Hindu : yet the Rana forsakes them. But for Pertap all would be placed on the same level by Akbar ; for our Chiefs have lost their valour and our women their honour. Akbar is the broker in the market of our race ; he has purchased all but the son of Udai who is beyond his price. What true Rajput would part with honour ? Yet how many have bartered it away. Will Chitore come to this market ? Though Pertap has squandered away wealth, yet this treasure has he kept. Despair has driven many to this mart, to witness their dishonour. From such infamy the descendant of Hamir alone has been preserved. The world asks, from what secret place does Pertap draw help ? He has none save the soul of manliness and his sword. With it has he well maintained the Rajput's pride. This broker in the market of men will one day be over-reached. He cannot live forever. Then will our race come to Pertap for the seed of the Rajput to sow in our desolate lands. To him all look for its preservation, that its purity may again become resplendent."

Such an appeal to such a man was certain of effect. As he read, Pertap's mood of weakness passed. Come what might, he would persist. Hardship and want were the destiny of him and his. By his futile struggle the flickering flame of Rajasthan's life was kept alive ; in him there survived that sorry remnant of the country's independence which might some day become the nucleus of its regeneration. If others were weak, he at least could be strong. So the imperial messenger returned to Delhi bearing a reply to Prithi Raj and a letter to Akbar, withdrawing the offer of submission.

The Emperor was none too pleased at the result of his forbearance and Prithi Raj's appeal ; but there was nothing to be done. Pertap was no longer worth a big military effort ; and Akbar's disappointment gave way to self-congratulation when he heard that the Rana in his desperation had resolved to leave Mewar and seek a new home beyond the Indus. This news was true. If the battered and hunted man could still respond to Prithi Raj's appeal to his patriotism, he realised that there was no longer hope for him in his own land. He determined to migrate and he summoned all loyal subjects to follow their king into some distant "land of promise." Such a desperate step stirred the people of Mewar to a great rally, and they hastened to gather round the tattered crimson standard. But a kinder fate

than that of an exile awaited Pertap. Bhama Sah, hereditary prime minister of Mewar, whose family had amassed vast wealth in the service of the state, sought out his master and put his fortune at his disposal. It was sufficient to maintain a considerable army in the field for many years. This act of devotion, coupled with an earnest prayer that Pertap might strike one more blow for the independence of Mewar, rapidly found imitation. The news that the Rana was coming forth from his woodland retreat to cross swords with Akbar and claim his throne spread like wildfire. Chieftains, ashamed of their subservience to Delhi, came over to him with their musters : and in a short time he was at the head of a force large enough to demand instant attention from the Emperor.

But that attention the latter could not give. It was the most favourable time for the re-conquest of Mewar. Akbar was growing old, and his increasing weakness and the domestic sorrows which were overclouding his life encouraged a spirit of revolt throughout the empire. The lion was dying, and the wolves and jackals, sniffing boldly near the "kill," snatched a bone or a goblet of flesh, or were wary trespassers in the monarch's hunting grounds. Akbar heard of his obstinate enemy's revival, but he could do little. Heartened by the sudden change of fortune, Pertap overwhelmed and drove before him the imperial

troops. His first victory brought him fresh adherents and in a series of brilliant engagements he re-captured town and fortress till all Mewar, save Chitore and Ajmer, was again his. Then he turned upon his hated foe Raja Man Singh and, defeating him, took and sacked his capital of Amber. It was the glorious sunset after the storm. The banked inky clouds had burst in torrents of woe and misfortune over the Rana, had been riven with the blazing lightning of death and treachery, and now the tempest was past and the sun, as it sank, suffused the sky with the radiance of hope. But it was only hope. Great as had been his victories, the old king, who had been Rana in name for more than a quarter of a century, feared for the land for which he had sacrificed so much and the larger part of which he had now recovered. Chitore, the goal of all his efforts still defied him, and he saw around him none stout-hearted enough to persist in a struggle which had meant for him starvation and bitter sorrows and must mean the same for those who followed him. His son, Prince Umra, was a man whose character showed little of that persistence, self-control and indifference to the soft delights of life which were qualities essential in the defender of Mewar's independence. Renewed pressure from Delhi would result in surrender ; his efforts, he felt, had been futile.

Such were the sad thoughts of the victorious Rana as he sat in the hut he had built by the

lake at Udaipur ; for he kept his vow and would not live in his father's palace as long as Chitore was not his. He did not long outlive his victories. As he lay dying, he groaned at his mental forecast of the fate of his country. The Chief of the Chondawuts asked what ailed him that he could not die in peace. Pertap bade him call the Chiefs around him. When they were come, he made a supreme effort and spoke to them. He warned them of the dangers, telling them of his fears that Prince Umra and they would yield, as many of them had already; to the seductions and allurements of Delhi. "My son will not content himself in this shelter. He will build palaces and live luxuriously. Pledge me your words that this shall not be ; that the independence of Mewar, for which I have starved and struggled such weary years, shall not be sacrificed in your hunger for palace delights." And the Chiefs swore : "No palace will we build, no rest or comfort will we know, till Chitore is regained. We swear by the honour and throne of Bappa Rawul." And so the war-worn Rana died.

JESWANT, RAO OF JODHPUR.

IN the reign of the Emperor Aurangzeb Jeswant Singh was Rao of Jodhpur. The story of his life is one of alternate loyal service and treachery to the cruel, intolerant and fanatical third son of Shah Jehan. His death was the signal for that outbreak of hostilities between the Rajputs and Delhi which was to last for a generation and be known as India's "Thirty Years War."

First of the Rajput States to take up arms in that struggle was Marwar—the modern Jodhpur, after Mewar the most powerful of them all. As in the case of Mewar (the modern Udaipur) and Amber (the modern Jaipur) Marwar has taken its later name from its chief city. The word "Marwar" means "the region of death." It was applied to part of that vast waste of arid land watered by the "Salt" Luni, flowing from its source at Ajmer to the Western Rann of Cutch, which formed Rajasthan.

At the end of the twelfth century (1192) Muhammad of Ghor (Shihab-ud-din), in pursuance of his deliberate plan to conquer India, after an unsuccessful attempt on Delhi the previous year, met and defeated Prithi Raj, the Chauhan Raja of Ajmer and Delhi, on

the plain of Tarain. Then he marched on Kanauj where the Gaharwar Rajputs reigned. Raja Jaichand was defeated and lost his life in a river that he was fording in his flight. Their power being broken, some years later the remnants of the Gaharwars—a few hundreds—were emigrants from their homeland on the Ganges. They wandered forth towards the desert lands watered only by the “Salt” Luni, as it flows southward to the Rumm or salt “Waste” of Cutch. There they established themselves, became known as Rathors, and founded the State of Marwar. They extended their boundaries gradually by fights with their neighbours or judicious intermarrying. Their capital was at first Mundore, but in 1459 Rao Joda founded Jodhpur. Thence forward till the time of Akbar the rulers of the State do not figure prominently in Rajput tradition. The Rao Maldeo it was who missed so great a chance of strengthening Rajasthan's position against the aggression of Delhi by his persecution of the Emperor Humayun when the son of Babar was a starving wanderer in the deserts of Rajputana. His grandson, Soor Singh, was a favourite of Akbar's and was on many occasions leader of the imperial troops. Soor Singh's son, Rao Guj, was loyal to Jehangir in his struggle with the Rajputs and his rebellious third son Shah Jehan, and at the fateful battle near Benares saved the day with his Rathors. But it is with the accession of the

Rao Jeswant, son of Guj, that Marwar and its ruler take a leading part in the making of the Indian history of the time. Shah Jehan (1627-58) owed his succession to the throne of Delhi to the loyalty of the Rajputs, many of whom were foremost among his generals and ministers. Towards the end of his reign he, too, had rebellious sons with whom to deal. There were four of them and, profiting by their father's growing weakness, they began revolts and fought among themselves for the not yet vacant throne. To three of them their father had entrusted each the governorship of an outlying portion of the Empire; and they had no sooner heard the news that he was dying than the storm of civil war broke out. Prince Dara, who was at home with his father, was accused by his brother Shuja of having poisoned Shah Jehan to hasten his succession in his three brothers' absence. Shuja was governor of Bengal and, having proclaimed himself Emperor and struck coins bearing his own effigy, he collected troops and marched on Agra. Dara prepared to defend his father and himself. Then Prince Murad, the youngest brother, also issued treasonable coinage, attacked Surat, levied an indemnity of six lakhs of rupees on its merchants and marched his army towards Delhi. Aurangzeb, who had lived for some years in religious retirement, awaited his opportunity, making no instant bid for the throne. To the aid of the Emperor most of

the Rajputs rallied. The Raja Jai Singh of Amber met and entirely routed Prince Shuja who lost artillery and treasure. The latter's army having thus been shattered and himself driven into exile, Aurangzeb entered the lists as a candidate, and joined forces with Murad. Against the two brothers the Emperor entrusted the leadership to the Rao Jeswant Singh. With a powerful army under his command had he acted with promptitude, he could have struck a blow at Aurangzeb before he was in touch with Murad. The latter had but few troops and would have had little chance of fighting by himself. Instead of this the Rao loitered on the banks of the Nerbudda, allowing the princes to meet, wishing, as he said, "to conquer two princes at once."

The result was disaster. "Under a withering storm of arrows and javelins," the rebel armies swarmed across the Nerbudda. At the first onslaught the Moghul guards, won, it is alleged, to treason by Aurangzeb, deserted and fled, leaving the Rao and some thirty thousand Rajput horsemen to defend the Emperor's throne. Gallant to recklessness and refusing to flinch at the heavy odds against them, the Rajputs charged. Then were again re-enacted the deeds of futile heroism, the useless sacrifice of desperate men's lives which had linked with an undying glory the names of so many Rajput fields of battle such as Fatehpur Sikri and Haldighat. Rajput tradition relates how

“Jeswant, spear in hand, mounted his steed Maboob and charged the imperial brothers. Ten thousand Muslims fell in the onset, which cost seventeen hundred Rathors, besides Gehlotes, Haras, Gores and some of every clan of Rajwarra. Aurangzeb and Murad only escaped because their days were not yet numbered. Maboob and his rider were covered with blood. Jeswant looked like a famished lion and like one he relinquished his prey.”

This heroic narration reads like victory ; but the day was lost. The Rajputs could never, it seems, learn to fight scientifically. They were much outnumbered and the princes were far superior in artillery and in the skilful handling of troops. The toll taken of the reckless Rajput horsemen was enormous. Of eight thousand Rathors only a few hundreds escaped the carnage, and at the end of many hours of fighting the Rao fled with a dispirited and broken army towards Jodhpur. The news of the disaster had travelled ahead of him, and when he reached his capital his chief queen, a princess of Mewar, had shut the gates in his face. Full of the fiery spirit of her race, defeat seemed intolerable to her, and she rallied the garrison and defied her husband. She would acknowledge no man as her lord who was vanquished and had lived to tell the tale. The Rajput tradition relates how “she commanded in a dry mood to shut the gates of the castle and not to let

this infamous man enter ; she declared that he was not her husband, that the son-in-law of the great Rana could not have so mean a soul ; that he was to remember that, being grafted into so illustrious a house, 'he was to imitate its virtue. In a word, he was to vanquish or to die." A moment after, she was of another humour. "She commanded a pile of wood to be laid, that she might burn herself ; (she said) that they abused her ; that her husband must needs be dead ; that it could not be otherwise. And a little while after she was seen to change countenance, to fall into a passion and break into a thousand reproaches against him."

After a time this extraordinary woman relented so far as to allow the gates to be opened for Jeswant and his wearied troops. But she would not see him or permit him to approach her apartments, where she remained in entire seclusion for more than a week. In this undutiful conduct she persisted, it is related, "till at last her mother coming, brought her in time to herself, by assuring her that as soon as the Raja had but refreshed himself, he would raise another army to fight Aurangzeb and repair his honour."

This outburst against Jeswant may have found its justification and explanation in her knowledge of her husband. Jeswant was not a great or worthy man. A fearless fighter and in his recklessness and love of war a true

Rajput, he was of a treacherous and fickle character, deserting his friends or allies in their direst need if it seemed to his interest to do so. Shortly after his defeat he entered upon a career of double-dealing which reached truly scandalous lengths. His defeat by Aurangzeb and Murad was followed up by the triumphant march of the princes on Delhi. Their brother Dara at the head of the imperial army was overwhelmed outside the city, and the unnatural sons proceeded to depose their father. They then marched to meet Prince Shuja and sent a messenger to Jeswant promising him pardon and asking him to bring the Rathors to their aid. Jeswant instantly forgot his allegiance to Shah Jehan and hastened to Aurangzeb's camp. At the same time he secretly communicated with Shuja making an arrangement with him to betray his side and attack Aurangzeb in the rear during the coming battle. This infamous act of treachery he duly carried out, leading his troops in an attack upon the baggage wagons and rear-guard of his own side. In a moment utter confusion resulted, and Jeswant, taking advantage of this, looted Aurangzeb's camp. He loaded camels with everything worth taking and marched off to Agra. He hoped no doubt that the fight, thus disastrously started, would end in the exhaustion of both sides, and that, having betrayed everybody, he could overwhelm the rebel sons, if they showed further fight, and restore Shah Jehan. When he reached

Agra, however, Prince Dara showed no eagerness to entrust to him the fortunes and person of the imprisoned Emperor. In disgust he retired to Jodhpur with his ill-gotten treasure. One would have imagined that Aurangzeb at least would have learned his lesson and would make no further effort to win Jeswant to his side. On the contrary, having turned the disaster of the Rao's desertion into a victory and summarily defeated Shuja, he sent a message of pardon to Jeswant, promising him the viceroyalty of Gujarat if he would desert Prince Dara. Ready always to desert anyone if it paid him, Jeswant again joined Aurangzeb. To him was entrusted the task of leading the Rajputs in an expedition against Sivaji, the great founder of the Mahratta power. No sooner had he taken the field, however, than he entered into correspondence with the Mahratta Chief, with a view to the murder of his own leader Shayista Khan and the assumption by him of sole command, when he proposed to unite the imperial army with the Mahratta forces. This plot was discovered and reported to Aurangzeb, now Emperor. Strangely enough, the latter still bore with the traitor, and, it is related, showed no sign in his manner of anger or resentment, though, as subsequent events prove, he was only awaiting a chance of dealing finally and drastically with him. Jeswant's command was given to the Raja Jai Singh of Amber, who had ever kept his faith with

the imperial family. Jeswant's life thenceforward was devoted, it seems, to perpetual plotting, treason and mean duplicity. As lord of Marwar he was a man whom Aurangzeb feared somewhat ; but even so it is difficult to understand why his treason was so often condoned. Possibly the Emperor dreaded to chance such a general rising of Rajasthan as an invasion of the traitor's state might provoke.

Had Jeswant been the hero and patriot that Rajput bards have endeavoured to make him, he had a great chance of recovering sovereign power for Rajasthan. A fighter of truly Rajput recklessness, he was the most powerful of the princes of his generation, and at one time at least was recognised as the warrior leader of his race. He could have carved out a new and glorious future for Rajasthan by rallying his fellow-countrymen and taking advantage of the disorganisation of the Empire and the domestic quarrels of Shah Jehan's last years. A really heroic and chivalrous figure would have united the Rajputs. Jeswant was none such, and disunion and mutual distrust paralysed the power of regeneration in Rajasthan. The princes played for their own hands ; there was no real patriotism, and the unscrupulous Aurangzeb bought over some and found means to be rid of others.

Jeswant, the arch-traitor, was the torment of Aurangzeb's life. "Sighs," says the Rajput

tradition, "never ceased flowing from the heart of Aurangzeb while Jeswant lived." Though he feigned friendliness, the Emperor endeavoured to lay hands on the Rao. But the latter was too clever and retired into "the region of death" at the least sign of danger or when one of his plots miscarried. At last, as it is related, "Aurangzeb, finding treachery in vain, put the collar of simulated friendship around Jeswant's neck and sent him beyond the Attock to die." The Afghans of Kabul were in rebellion and Jeswant received the orders of the Emperor to command the imperial army to be sent to reduce them to order. There was no refusal possible. It was a post of high honour, and the Rao, leaving the affairs of his state in the hands of his eldest son Prithi Singh, started out for the north-west, to the relief of Aurangzeb.

Soon after his father's departure the young prince was summoned to Delhi, where he was received by the Emperor with great affability and kindness. Aurangzeb was preparing to take his revenge for the years of treachery which he had borne from the Rao. As the youth stood in reverent attitude before the throne, his hands folded on his breast, the Emperor, placing his own hand on his, said: "Rathor, it is told me your arm is as strong as your father's. What can you do now?" And Prithi Singh replied: "My Lord, when the Sovereign of mankind lays the hand of protection on the meanest of his subjects, all that subject's hopes are realised.

But when he condescends to take both of mine, I feel as if I could conquer the world."

And those who stood around the throne saw the Emperor's face darken as he looked down on the young face and heard him murmur "Truly, he is a second Jeswant." But to the prince he spoke kindly, commending his ready wit. And, calling his attendants, he bade them prepare for him a robe of honour; and there in the imperial presence, as was the custom, the prince had to put it on. Leaving the audience hall, he was soon afterwards seized with severe pain and in a few hours he was dead. His body was blackened and contorted as with some convulsion. The Rajput chroniclers assume that the robe was saturated with poison, though he might have died of cholera. When Jeswant in Afghanistan heard the news of his heir's death, he at least had no doubt. Aurangzeb, having banished him under the pretext of honouring him, had murdered his beloved son. The grief that he felt proved with what a cruel wisdom Aurangzeb had planned his long postponed vengeance. The man, whose avarice and selfishness had been proof against feelings of shame at his own dishonour, was bowed down by his loss. His course of deceit and treachery was run. His dauntless spirit was broken. And he was to drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs. Exiled in the mockery of honour, compelled to fight the battles of his enemy, it was his fate to see his two younger sons die of fever in Kabul,

victims of his banishment. With no appetite for further intrigue or treachery, he died a broken-hearted man, far from his home, after a reign of forty-two years. The triumph of Aurangzeb seemed complete. But from the ashes of Jeswant's funeral pyre strife and years of war were to arise. Two of his queens were with him in Kabul, and at his death, one of them, the princess of Mewar, was not permitted to give herself to the flames, for she was heavy with child. Within two months of Jeswant's death she bore a son, Ajit, who was fated to awake the slumbering hostility between Rajput and Muslim.

RANA SANGRAM.

RANA SANGRAM, who succeeded to the throne of Mewar in 1716, was true to the breed of Bappa Rawul. He was not a "lion of battle." His reign was not glorified with great victories. He did not live for fighting, an heroic swash-buckler, like his ancestor Prithi Raj; the wars he waged were all defensive. But he was a sternly just and strong ruler, a man of indomitable will who set before himself as his object in life the good of his people and subordinated all to its achievement. His were troublous times; but he kept Mewar aloof from the intrigues and ruinous internecine strife which were heralding the downfall of the Moghul dominion. He defended the state against the growing insolence and aggression of the Mahrattas and he gave his people peace and justice.

His father, Umra II, died when he was a child, and during his minority his mother held the regency. She was a remarkable woman who served the state well and surrendered the administration to her son at last in a stable and well ordered condition. Sangram soon showed himself a born ruler. From his youth he had been noticeable for his gravity of demeanour and his self-control, and he was no sooner seated on the *gadi* than his chieftains and people alike recognised that he meant to be master. The

weakness of his predecessors and the turbulence of the times had encouraged his nobles to disorder and independence which were opposed to the best interests of the state. This tendency he suppressed with a strong hand. "It was in regard to one such instance that he and his masterful mother had a tussle for the supreme power. Having been so long regent, she was indignant that her son should now banish her from his councils and exhibit such self-reliance. He was a most dutiful son, but he let her see that he would brook no interference in affairs of state. Their relations continued somewhat strained in this regard till matters came to a climax over the disgrace of the lord of Deriavud. This Chief of the blood royal had incurred Sangram's extreme displeasure by disobedience and the mismanagement of his lands. So recalcitrant had he proved that the Rana took the drastic step of confiscating his estate and banishing him from Court. The noble retired in sullen discontent. It was realised by all his vassals that Sangram was not a sovereign to tolerate intrigue. His name for justice was already then so well established that the offender knew that an appeal to his brother nobles against their king was foredoomed to failure. But after two years of exile he ventured to approach the queen-mother through some ladies of the court, begging that she would endeavour to obtain him a pardon. As an inducement to make efforts on his behalf he

sent costly presents to the ladies and a direct bribe of two lakhs of rupees to the Rani.

The latter, by no means displeased to show her power in state affairs, raised the question in conversation with Sangram the next day when he came, as was his custom, to pay his respects to her before he eat his mid-day meal. To her appeal for the exile he listened with respectful attention; nor did he betray any anger when she confessed to the acceptance of the bribe that the Chief had had the temerity to send her. To her great satisfaction he at once agreed to restore Deriavud to favour. In such matters as royal decrees a formal delay of some days was usual between the promulgation and the date at which the royal order took effect. In this case Sangram called at once for his officials, and there and then the document of pardon and restoration of estate was drawn up and sealed in the Rani's chamber. This done, the Rana rose, kissed his mother's hands and, begging her to return the money bribe to the impertinent noble, left her.

The Rani was flattered at her easy triumph, but her satisfaction was short-lived. Her son ceased to visit her at the accustomed hour. Day after day passed but no Rana appeared. Each morning some noble in attendance was the bearer of her son's filial respects and enquiries after her health, and that was all. Sangram's dutifulness forbade him to refuse a

request from his mother ; but he could at least avoid giving occasion for any such importunity in future. The Queen was in despair. The whole palace knew of her humiliation. She endeavoured to persuade her son's chief minister to see her with a view to his intercession on her behalf. The astute *diwan* respectfully replied that in such a matter he could not wait upon her without the King's command. Her temper and health suffered from wounded pride. She was angry and piteous by turns. She stormed, she starved, she wept ; but, though she took care that these daily scenes were known to her son, he made no sign of relenting. Finally, as a last resort, she sent word that she proposed to go on pilgrimage to the holy places on the Ganges. The Rana dutifully made preparations for her safety, ordering a portion of his body-guard to act as escort ; but he let her be borne away in the state palanquin without a sight of him.

As the Queen passed Amber, the Raja Jai Singh rode out from his city to pay his respects. He was related to the royal family of Mewar and the two states were on the friendliest terms. Having greeted the Rani with the utmost courtesy and cordiality, nothing would satisfy him but that she should spare the time to inspect his new capital of Jaipur. In his eagerness to show her honour His Highness actually put his shoulder under the

pole of her litter. The Queen was so touched by his grace and kindness that she made him her confidant and begged him to see Sangram on her behalf. This Jai Singh agreed to do ; and so after she had completed her pilgrimage and returned to Amber, she found him waiting with a large retinue to accompany her back to Udaipur. The news of her return was conveyed to the Rana who guessed the errand upon which the Raja had embarked. Determined to have no interference between his mother and himself any more than he would tolerate hers in affairs of state, he did not await her arrival but rode out to greet her. Finding them encamped, he welcomed the Raja and then passed on to his mother's tent, affectionately saluting her and asking her blessing. Then with stately ceremonial he escorted her to Udaipur and the estrangement was thus ended. But the queen-mother never forgot her lesson or her son's dignified rebuke that "family quarrels should be kept in families."

If Sangram was a lover of a peaceful and ordered administration, he was no man to bear a menace to the realm. He was not an Udai Singh to live in luxurious indolence while the foes of the state were abroad. It is related of him that one day as he was about to begin his dinner news was brought to him that some Pathans of Malwa had invaded his territory at Mundisore and were looting and burning the villages around and carrying off his subjects as

slaves. Pushing aside the dishes, he called for his armour and bade them beat the war drum. In obedience to his summons the Chiefs collected eager to learn what the King's wishes were. When they heard that it was a band of Pathans against whom the Rana proposed to ride, they made bold to dissuade him, pointing out that his presence in the field would too greatly honour such freebooters. They—his vassals—would punish the infidels ; it was no task for his august sword. So Sangram stayed in his palace and bade his nobles god-speed. After they had been gone some hours the chieftain of Kanorh, worn and thin with fever, appeared in his armour. He had risen from a sick bed and so he was late, and he begged to know the Rana's will. Sangram tried to persuade the faithful old man to go back home ; but, on hearing their errand, the Chief leapt to horse and galloped after his compeers. In the ensuing fight (in which the Pathan robbers were slaughtered almost to a man) he fell with many of his followers and his young son was wounded. So touched was the Rana at this devotion that at the next audience to which the lad was able to come he paid him the high honour of giving him with his own hands the *betel*. This was a distinction reserved for vassals of the highest rank, but all the Chiefs approved its bestowal in this case as being deserved by the courage and dutifulness of the youth's dead father.

If Sangram was an imperious overlord, he was strictly just. He repaid loyalty with loyalty and confidence. An Indian court is the home of intrigue and petty jealousies. Those around the sovereign are ever ready to try to increase their power by exciting suspicion of their rivals. Such an attempt at the expense of Saloombra, lord of the Chondawut clan, was made on the occasion of his victorious return from leading the Mewar contingent in one of the imperial wars. The chieftain led his triumphant horsemen back into Mewar, but ventured to send them on to Udaipur alone, while begging the Rana's permission to visit his family before appearing at court. This innocent request, prompted by domestic affection, was twisted by malicious rivals into a sign that Saloombra was a traitor. They said that he had concerted plans with Delhi or some of the enemies of the state, and hastened to his district to rally his henchmen for a revolt against the Rana. Silently and scornfully Sangram listened to these allegations. Then he declared them to be without foundation. But that all should know them as spiteful lies, he sent an urgent message to Saloombra, bidding him come to Udaipur without an hour's delay. The royal messenger found the Chief almost on the threshold of the women's apartments where his mother, wives and children were eagerly expecting him. Remounting without even delaying to salute

them, he galloped off towards Udaipur. When, exhausted and travel-stained, late in the evening he reached his dwelling within the city, no preparations had been made for his reception by his servants who believed him to be still in his castle. But when the news of his arrival reached the Rana, he despatched palace servants with rich food in many dishes and sumptuous bedding and ample provision for his horses and men. In the morning the Chief presented himself and Sangram was more than usually gracious. On dismissing him, he gave him not only those formal gifts of ceremony, a horse and jewels, the right of a noble of the highest rank, but a grant of royal land. When Saloombra enquired why he was so honoured and learned the reason, he declined respectfully to accept the territory. He had, he urged, done nothing to merit it. His loyalty, as his inherited duty and pleasure, deserved no reward, and he desired no compensation for the royal order to leave his home inopportunately. As the Rana begged him to accept some mark of the royal favour, Saloombra at last craved for himself and his descendants, whenever summoned on state business by the sovereign, the privilege of having just so many dishes as had been sent to him over night provided for them from the palace. This boon was granted, and the incident confirmed the "devotion of ruler and subject and taught the malicious gossips a salutary lesson.

Though not a mean man, Sangram was economical and most methodical in his household affairs. The royal income had scarce sufficed for some of his extravagant predecessors or had been so recklessly squandered at times as to necessitate fresh levies on their subjects. He systematised it and divided it into headings according to the townships. Each of these had to provide some specific part of the royal needs. Thus one found the money for the Rana's wardrobe, another for the palace rice, another for the sweetmeats and sugar, another for the expenses of the stables and so on.

It is related that on one occasion he suffered for his love of system. He gave away the village which supplied the sugar and he had to eat his dish of curds, an essential item of a Rajput's meal, without sweetening it. Once, too, he taught a critical noble how severely accurate was his system. This man had ventured to condemn the court dress of Mewar as old-fashioned and begged the Rana to order new and more sumptuous robes to be worn. Shortly afterwards, while in residence at his castle, he received a message from the King intimating that he had been pleased to reclaim as royal land two of his village districts. The Chief, puzzled at such an undeserved punishment—for he was not conscious of having given his sovereign any cause for anger—hastened to Udaipur. Admitted to an audience, he begged to know his offence. "You have not

offended, my lord. I have re-assumed possession of your lands because I desire to grant your request for a richer and fuller robe of ceremony at my court. My revenues are so strictly adjusted that I find I have no lands which can be allotted for this extra expense. So I had to take yours or refuse your petition, which I am anxious not to be obliged to do." The humbled Chief begged to be allowed to withdraw a prayer which was to cost him so dear. Thenceforward he never ventured to criticise Sangram's rigid economies.

The death of the Rana in 1734 was the signal for a decline of the dignity and power of Mewar. His firm and just rule had compelled such loyalty from the Chiefs and so organised and husbanded the resources of the state that its enemies harassed it only at their peril. But his wise and prudent government was not maintained. Extravagance and weakness were the characteristics of the Ranas who misruled for the next few score of years; while Mewar and all Rajasthan fell under the oppression and merciless exactions of the Mahratta robbers or wasted their valour and power in bitter internecine wars.

SIVAI JAI SINGH OF JAIPUR.

IN the days of Rajasthan's glory the State of Amber, or Jaipur as it is now known from its modern capital city, was a minor principality reckoned of less importance than the estates of some of the greater nobles of Mewar and Marwar. Its ruling family is of the tribe of Cuchwahs or "Tortoises," despised by other Rajputs as poor "men of their hands." Amber was the first of Rajput States to form an alliance with the Moghuls. Raja Bihari Mal submitted to the marriage of his daughter with Akbar, and Bhagwan Das, his son and successor, gave his daughter to Prince Salim (The Emperor Jehangir). The son of Bhagwan Das was the famous Raja Man Singh who was one of the staunchest adherents and most successful generals of Akbar. For his Muslim master he led army after army against his enemies, whether they were rebellious kinsmen, turbulent Afghans or men of his own blood such as Pertap of Mewar. For him Akbar entertained a high regard, and he was successively the imperial Governor of Bengal, Behar, the Deccan and Kabul. But Man Singh, it is related, towards the end of the reign, grew too powerful, or so Akbar thought. Rajput legend relates that the Emperor's jealous fears ended in costing him his own

life. It is said that he had a sweetmeat box with two compartments. One side contained confections of an innocuous nature ; the other held delicacies as sweet but containing poisons of the deadliest type compounded with the sugar. If the Emperor desired to be rid of a troublesome vassal, he offered him a poisoned sweet. No one dared to refuse so high a distinction as a dip into the imperial box ; and, having eaten the lozenge, the victim had just time to go out of the palace to die. It was the custom of Akbar himself to take a sweet as thus he offered death to those who had incurred his displeasure. In Man Singh's case it is alleged that by a mistake he offered a sweetmeat from the harmless compartment to the Raja, taking his own from the poisoned delicacies, paying at last the penalty of his own mean deceit. But this account of the death of "the noblest king that ever ruled India" is stoutly denied by the Muslim historians.

In 1615 Akbar's intended victim died after a reign which had done much to raise Amber to a position of power. His two immediate successors were not men of his masterful stamp, and the state drifted back towards its former insignificance. But the days of its prosperity under Man Singh were soon to be eclipsed by the accession of his great-nephew Jai Singh. This youth was of a haughty and ambitious character, and he attracted the favourable

attention of one of the Rajput queens of the Emperor Jehangir, Joda Bai of Bikanir. Believing him fittest of all his family to fill the throne, she used her influence to promote his interests with her husband, with the result that he became Raja of Amber. The story of his succession is dramatically told. It is said that, as he walked beneath a balcony on which Jehangir and Joda Bai stood, the former called to him : "Ho ! Raja of Amber, come and make your *saluams* to Joda Bai, to whom you owe your throne." And the proud youth, looking up (so the story goes), told the Emperor that he would gladly bow his head before a Princess of the House of Tinur, but he could not, by Rajput custom, humble himself before a woman of his own race. He did not dare to add what he doubtless meant, that the custom of his race gained strength in its prohibition from the fact that the Princess of Bikanir had become degraded by mating with a Muslim.

Notwithstanding his arrogance and the affront to the queen, Jai Singh got his throne, and very magnificently he filled it. His early haughtiness increased with years and power. He amassed wealth and extended his territory till he became one of the greatest of the vassal kings of Delhi. He was a successful general and served Jehangir and Aurangzeb well. He led the imperial troops to victory again and again, notably against the troublesome Sivaji

whom he captured and kept a prisoner until he suspected that the latter Emperor purposed to kill him, when he let the great Mahratta leader escape. He had also architectural tastes and laboured to make his city beautiful, building that Hall of Audience which with its carved red sandstone columns is still one of the wonders of India. Of this marvellous sculptured chamber rumours, which lost nothing, one may be sure, in the journey thither, reached Delhi. Jehangir learned with jealous rage that his tributary had had the insolence to erect a hall more magnificent than any at Delhi or Agra. He would not tolerate such treasonable rivalry, and he sent envoys to superintend the demolition of the structure. But when they reached Amber and were welcomed with the utmost courtesy by the Raja, they saw nothing but a hall pillared with plain stucco columns. There was nothing to be done but to return to Delhi and assure Jehangir that Amber was not likely to eclipse the imperial capital. The arrogant Jai Singh thought it as well to leave the glories of the carver's art safely hidden beneath their modest envelope of stucco.

But if he was content to hide the light of his architectural magnificence under a bushel of plaster, Jai Singh saw no reason to modify his haughtiness of manner or to pretend to a deference to the Moghuls which he did not feel. As he grew older, he became more and more reckless, and sinister reports of his treasonable

utterances were made to Aurangzeb. It was stated, for instance, that he sat in *darbar*, attended by a score or more of chieftains, each of whom could muster a following of a thousand horse, and that he boasted of his power before the assembly. On one occasion he had gone so far in his braggadocio talk as to declare that he could destroy the empire. Calling for two glass vases, he told his nobles and people that one was Delhi and the other Satara, then the headquarters of the Mahrattas. Holding the latter in his left hand and Delhi in his right, he threw the Mahratta goblet to the ground, smashing it to fragments. "Thus ends at my will the power of Sivaji, and here I hold the fortunes of the Moghuls to make or mar." This reckless speech was repeated to Aurangzeb ; and he knew no peace till he was able to compass the death of his vainglorious vassal. Fearing an outbreak of the Rajputs if he invaded Amber, the Rajput story is that he prevailed on Jai Singh's son to poison his father by promising him the succession to the throne. The youth doctored his father's opium, and the Emperor rejoiced at the success of his plot. But the infamous deed was not rewarded with the *gadi*. The parricide was granted only a small estate and his elder brother Ram Singh became Raja.

Under him the fortunes of Amber declined and the country fared even worse during the reign of his successor Bishen Singh. But the latter's son, another Jai Singh, known as Sivai

("one and a quarter"), a title conferred on him by the Emperor to indicate that he was more than a match for all his contemporaries, restored the power of the state. In his magnificence he eclipsed his haughty "name-sake. He was the greatest of the Cuchwahs, and is described in Rajput annals as "Jai Singh of the one hundred and nine virtues," a singularly inappropriate name to judge by his record of violence, cunning and treachery. He it was who built the city of Jaipur with its rose-coloured "Palace of the Wind," and made the town one of the wonders of Indian architecture.

Each of Bishen Singh's two queens had borne him a son. Jai Singh was the elder; and Beejoy Singh, the younger, was early sent to live with the family of his mother who feared for his life. On the death of his father Jai Singh became Maharaja. There was no question as to his right, and soon afterwards Beejoy Singh seemed to forego formally the shadowy claim that Oriental intrigue might have advanced for him by an affectionate message to his brother begging him to grant him as his appanage the district of Busswa. To this the Maharaja agreed, glad thus to commute Beejoy's claim or ambitions to succession. Imagining that he had by this grant of land secured undisputed possession of the *gadi*, Jai Singh was startled soon afterwards by a story that reached him from a friendly source at Delhi.

Beejoy, he was informed, was plotting to wrest the throne from him, encouraged in his designs by his mother who had been guarding his interests at Amber in his absence. He had, Jai Singh learned, been supplied by her with jewels and gold wherewith to bribe the imperial ministers. The Grand Vizier, Kumrodin Khan, had been thus won over, and matters had gone so far that the Emperor had agreed to his claim being recognised in return for a contingent of five thousand horse and a vast tribute in gold.

Jai Singh was now for the first time to prove himself a prince who by his cunning, duplicity and skill in the art of acting emotions was a personification of Niccolo Machiavelli's "Prince" of fiction. He summoned a trusted minister, his nazir, and related all to him. The latter, quoting the bard Chand, "the fountain of Rajput wisdom," bade him remember that "Arguments, Gifts, Force and Stratagems govern all human affairs," and he declared that, if Beejoy were really plotting as was reported, his designs could be best countered by the fourth. Jai Singh found this advice sound, and he took measures first to put himself right in the eyes of his subjects, posing as the affectionate and injured brother and the conscientious ruler. He summoned to an audience the Chiefs of Amber and he said "I am your lawful sovereign. You have sworn fealty to me. Now enemies of our State

have schemed to dethrone me, prevailing on my brother, who has declared himself satisfied with the district of Busswa, to lend himself to their wicked plots." And the nobles, with Mohun Singh of Chomoo, lord of the Nathawut clan as their spokesman, assured Jai Singh of their loyalty and that he could trust them to defend his throne with their life's blood. Let him leave it all in their hands. But they stipulated that his alleged treason should not cost Beejoy the territory of Busswa. And the Maharaja, cunningly dissembling his real feelings, pledged his word that he would not revoke his grant or reclaim the lands. He bore towards his brother, he assured them, no feelings but those of natural affection.

So the Chiefs went their ways, and presently a message was sent to Beejoy Singh by them, asking him to come to Amber and make his peace with his brother. They assured him that, if he had weakly listened to the tempting voices of conspirators against Jai Singh, still his folly would not cost him his new territory if he would but come and make homage for it. Beejoy's reply was that he was no traitor, and that he had no designs on his father's throne. But now Jai Singh thought that he had reason to suspect him, and he feared to visit Amber. To this the great Chiefs responded by solemnly pledging their words for his safety, swearing to dethrone the Maharaja and make Beejoy king if Jai Singh played them false.

Thus reassured the young prince, who was at Delhi, sought leave from the Emperor to go to Amber and do homage for his new territory. It is not clear if he had then or ever had had the alleged designs against his brother. But there seems no doubt that the imperial authorities would have preferred him as Maharaja to his haughty brother, and that Kumrodin Khan at least hoped that his visit might end in his winning Amber. He was given an escort of six thousand horse and, accompanied by two nobles of the imperial court, started out for Amber. But he never intended to enter that city. He was suspicious of his brother who wished him to come there. After the interchange of several messages, it was at last arranged that the meeting should take place at Sanganair, six miles south-west of Jaipur.

When Jai Singh was leaving Amber, surrounded by his Chiefs, a messenger from his mother brought him her request that she might be allowed to witness the meeting between the brothers. The Maharaja, as he had been careful to do throughout the negotiations, consulted the nobles who said that such a request should certainly be granted. So behind the sovereign's cavalcade came the queen-mother in her state litter followed by three hundred ornate palanquins.

The meeting between the brothers was of the most affectionate nature. Amid the acclamations of the chieftains and peoples Jai Singh

took Beejoy into his arms in the audience hall at Sanganaïr. Then he said : " Here, brother, is the grant of Busswa ; but so dear are you to me that, if you desire it greatly, I myself will take the territory and yield my throne to you, elder son though I am." And Beejoy, who seems to have acted throughout in sincerity, assured his brother that he was no traitor, that he had asked for Busswa and would be satisfied with Busswa. He desired nothing more. As the brothers talked thus pleasantly together, the queen-mother sent to ask if she should come to the hall or whether they would visit her in the women's apartments that she might rejoice with them in their reconciliation. The Chiefs being again consulted by the cunning Jai Singh, they gave it as their opinion that it would be more decorous for the princes to wait upon the Rani. So the Maharaja, taking Beejoy by the hand, left the hall of audience.

At the door of the zenana Jai Singh, taking the dagger from his belt, gave it to the eunuch on guard, exclaiming " such weapons are out of place here." It was the last of the traps set for the confiding Beejoy, and he stumbled thoughtlessly into it. In a moment he had unbuckled his jewelled dagger and laid it aside, following his false-hearted brother within the curtains. In a moment, as the door clanged to behind him, he was seized by arms very different to those of an affectionate woman

rejoicing in a family reunion. Helplessly he struggled in the grip of a gigantic man, the Bhatti Chief, who had been borne to Sanganaïr in the royal box, the leader of hundreds of fierce soldiers who had masqueraded as ladies in waiting hidden in the litters which followed the supposed Rani. The mean plot had entirely succeeded. Beejoy was a prisoner, his hands and feet securely tied. Presently the procession of palanquins started back for Amber, amid the plaudits and *salaams* of the people. They little knew that the first gold-bedecked litter held no queen-mother but a captive prince helpless in the grip of a brutal creature of Jai Singh.

When the latter knew that all danger of rescue was past and that Beejoy would be soon imprisoned in Amber, he returned to the audience hall. Amazed at the length of his absence and at his return alone, the Chiefs demanded to know what had happened and where his brother was. "In my belly," said Jai Singh brutally. "Sons of Bishen Singh are we both. I am elder and rightful heir; but if you want him as ruler, slay me." As the astounded men kept silence, he went on. "For your sakes I have forfeited my faith. Had Beejoy Singh dethroned me, you and yours must have died or been driven into exile." Thus, adroitly appealing to their self-interest, Jai Singh silenced any protests. The chieftains withdrew in sullen displeasure. They had not

the courage to keep their word to Beejoy who was no doubt killed in Amber, after his escort had been persuaded by gold or threats to return to Delhi without him.

Perhaps nothing is more curious in Indian history than the way in which those who had the power to avenge or whose interests were imperilled by it acquiesced again and again in some flagrant crime or hideous act of treachery. It seems to have been so in Jai Singh's case. It is difficult to imagine a baser act than his or one apparently more unnecessary and more likely to incense the Great Moghul. Yet it seems to have been passed over without serious protest or any punitive expedition. From this vilely treacherous beginning Jai Singh went on from success to success, truly the wicked man of the Psalmist, "in great power spreading himself like a green bay tree." Astute and utterly unscrupulous, he converted the strifes of his country and the wars and difficulties of the suzerain power at Delhi into solid advantages to his principality. He stole territory, sold his sword to the highest bidder, and betrayed everyone in turn. A false friend and a treacherous foe, he succeeded mainly by chicanery and cunning in building up the fortunes of Amber till in

*Rajput chronicles say nothing of Beejoy's fate. It has been suggested that he is to be identified with Chumunji, an elder brother of Jai Singh, whom the latter is stated to have had killed.

influence and power he ranked as one of Rajasthan's greatest sovereigns.

The story of how he added Deoti to his dominions is told as an example of his way of dealing with neighbours. Deoti was a small state on the borders of Amber. Its capital town was Rajore and there ruled the chief of the Birgoojur clan. The Birgoojurs were no friends with the Cuchwahas. They claimed to be an older branch of the same Rajput stock and they scorned to give their women in marriage to the Moghul princes as did Jai Singh's family. Matters between the two states came to a head owing, it is related, to the ill-temper and hotheadedness of the younger brother of the Birgoojur chieftain. The latter being at the time away serving in the imperial army with his state levy of men-at-arms, the administration was entrusted to the lad who was a most enthusiastic hunter. Eager one day to be off after the wild boar, he showed such irritation at the lateness of his meal that his sister-in-law who was preparing it twitted him by the taunt, "anyone would think you were going to throw a lance at Jai Singh, you are in such haste."

Furious at the suggestion that he had not the courage to attack the Maharaja, the young prince swore that he would not take food from her hands or in the palace till he had done what she had dared him to do. Setting out with one or two followers for Amber, he waited

outside the city walls for many days, enduring much hardship—for he could get but little food—before he had the chance for which he waited. Wearied out with his vigil and having been without food for three days, at last he saw the litter of the Maharaja being borne through the gates and out along the ~~road~~ where he waited. As it approached, he took aim and flung his spear which, a second later, quivered in the panel of the palanquin. Seized by the men-at-arms, he was about to be beheaded when Jai Singh ordered him to be bound and brought before him on his return to the palace.

The next day when the youth appeared before the Maharaja, he told the story of his ridiculous acceptance of his sister-in-law's challenge. He added that, had it not been for his weakness through starvation, his aim would have been better and that Jai Singh would not have lived to rescue him from the enraged guards. Jai Singh, admiring the prince's resolution, spared his life and sent him back to Rajore well mounted and with an escort of fifty men. But this kindness was not genuine. He had determined to make the youth's foolhardy act the excuse for annexing to his territory the district of Deoti. The return of the boy in this mock majesty was so construed by his sister-in law and their counsellors. Preparations were made for the attack that would surely come, and the women and

children were sent to the Raja of Deoti, then with the troops at Anopsheher on the Ganges.

These suspicions proved well founded. Within a day or two Jai Singh summoned his nobles and related to them all that had happened. Then he bade them prepare to seize for him the state of Deoti. But when the *pan*, which the Rajputs must always eat before they set out for war, was offered, no Chief partook of it. Mohun Singh, Lord of Nathawut clan, whose sister it was whose foolish words had provoked the Birgoojur prince to his wild act, begged Jai Singh to abandon the idea of war with Deoti. He urged that it was not fair so to punish a neighbour for a boy's reckless act, and that the Emperor, with whose army the Deoti Raja was serving, might well be provoked by an attack upon the state in his absence.

Jai Singh dismissed the Chiefs, but he had made up his mind for war. So in a few weeks he once more sent for them. Again none would take the *pan* save a minor Chief whose followers numbered no more than a hundred and fifty. His name was Futtch Singh Bunbeerpota, and the Maharaja bade him take his own men and five thousand of the royal troops and capture Deoti. When this force reached Rajore the young prince was away from the town hunting. When Futtch sent messengers bidding him to surrender, he had them killed. So there

was nothing left to Jai Singh's general but to attack ; and the prince and his followers were slaughtered and Rajore was besieged and taken. Futteh, leaving a garrison there, had the corpses of the young prince and his chief followers beheaded, and rode back to Amber in triumph carrying the heads wrapped in cloths. The ghastly proofs of his victory were laid at the feet of Jai Singh who rejoiced when he saw the features of the headstrong Birgoojur prince. But Mohun Singh, the lad's uncle, when he recognised his kinsman, showed such sorrow for his untimely end that the Maharaja in a fit of rage accused him of disloyalty. "Your scruples delayed my vengeance for a month," he said. "You had no tears for me when the lance was thrown at me." And he banished him and deprived him of his estates, and Mohun Singh took refuge in Udaipur. The Raja of Deoti lived in exile at Anopsheher, in which district his descendants have been land-owners into modern times.

If Sivai Jai Singh became rich by such acts of aggression and merciless vengeance as this acquisition of Deoti, he used his wealth in useful as well as ostentatious ways. He was a generous patron of the arts, and encouraged architecture especially by his unstinted expenditure on Jaipur and his eager search for builders of genius. Towards science he was always inclined and became by assiduous study no mean astronomer. He erected observatories at

Jaipur, Benares and elsewhere and spent whole nights in watching the heavens. He compiled a series of tables of the stars' movements as the result of seven years of study, and these he declared were more accurate than the tables of De La Hire, which he procured from Europe. His astronomical instruments compared favourably with any in the West and the results obtained through them were strikingly accurate. He was interested in mathematics and had Euclid, Treatises on Plane and Spherical Trigonometry and Napier's "Logarithms" translated into Sanskrit. He was proud of his library and of his collection of MSS., some of great value.

In his dealings with his subjects he showed himself always a just if also a stern man. He could be kind-hearted. He was self-controlled and seldom acted in passion or impetuously save when he was drunk ; for he was a heavy drinker. He looked after the health and general welfare of the people. Among other considerate actions he built at his own expense rest-houses for travellers in most parts of his dominions. He was interested, too, in social reforms and by restrictive legislation tried to stop the ruinous expenses which Hindu fathers were by time-honoured custom obliged to incur on the marriages of their daughters.

For four and forty years Sivai Jai Singh reigned. His death in 1743 was the beginning of the decay of the power of the State.

His successors were men of weak character and mean abilities. His descendant Juggut Singh in his profligate extravagance stripped palace and shrine of their treasures. He sold the crown jewels and converted Jai Singh's library with its priceless manuscripts into money. He squandered this on the dancing girls and court beauties whose whims and caprices it was his highest ambition to humour and gratify.

A RAJPUT BLOOD FEUD.

THE Rajput chronicles tell of a blood feud between Mewar and Boondi, and how the meetings of Rana and Rao were cursed by a *Sati* from her funeral pyre. The story runs as follows. The great lake in the palace grounds at Chitore was being drained on one occasion. When all the water had been run off, an image in stone of a three-armed god was found imbedded in the mud. This statue was remarkable because the three arms pointed in different directions,—one towards the sky, one to the earth and one straight out in front. When it was taken to the Rana, he summoned his soothsayers and wise men and bade them unriddle for him the mystery of the arms. One and all declared themselves unable to explain the meaning. Then the Rana became angry and he issued a decree banishing all the soothsayers from Mewar.

After a while and when all had despaired of solving the puzzle or of the Rana relenting, a holy man came to Chitore. He begged audience of the king, for he could, he said, explain the mystery of the image. When he appeared before the Rana, he showed no fear but spoke out boldly saying: "One arm points heavenward to show that there is one lord of the gods, Indra. The arm

pointing down means that there is but one lord of Hell, while that pointing out straight signifies that between Hell and Heaven there is one lord, the Rana of Mewar." And the man's explanation found favour and the Rana bade him crave a boon and would have given him gold, jewels and robes of honour. But the holy man refused all material reward since he had vowed never to accept gifts of the world's goods. He asked only that the harsh decree should be rescinded and that the soothsayers might be allowed to return to Mewar. The Rana immediately granted this petition and the banished men came back. Their benefactor took up his abode in Chitore and lived there surrounded by much reverence and paid great honour by the Rana and his family.

One day the Rana's eldest son was returning from a hunting expedition. As he neared Chitore, he met an old priest coming from the city. He looked very sad and was carrying in his hand a cocoanut, the sign that he had as errand the offer of marriage. The young prince, respectfully saluting the Brahmin, enquired of his purpose and why he was so sorrowful. "Prince," replied he, "I am as because of the answer I must take to my master Lallaji the Hara chieftain of Boondi. He sent me to offer his daughter in marriage to your august father the Rana. But His Highness does not desire the maiden, and I am sad at heart at the humiliation which

such an answer will bring to the Hara Chief." The prince bade him be of good cheer. "If my father will not take another wife, I will not willingly see a chieftain so brave and noble as Lallaji aggrieved and shamed. Go therefore to him and tell him that the heir of the Rana of Mewar will wed his daughter."

The priest, rejoicing exceedingly, made his way back to Boondi. Lallaji heard the glad tidings with pride and set about the preparations for the wedding. In due time the Rana's son arrived at the castle of Bumaoda where the ceremony was to be performed. Among his other attendants he brought with him the holy man who had unravelled the mystery of the three-armed god. The Hara chieftain and his family received the prince with much honour. Amid the acclamations and blessings of the people he and his retinue entered the castle which was all aflutter with flags and richly embroidered hangings and beautified with flowers scenting the air with their rich perfumes. Lallaji loaded the prince's courtiers with gifts of honour. To the holy man, for whom the Rana and his family entertained so deep an attachment, he offered specially sumptuous presents, a horse magnificently caparisoned and gold-bedecked robes and money in bags.

When the soothsayer saw these glittering gifts, he was tempted to forget his vow, and he accepted them. But, as the thought

of his weakness and wickedness grew upon him, his conscience so reproached him that life became intolerable to him. Even while the bridal ceremony was going forward and the hands of prince and maid had been joined by the Brahmins, he stabbed himself to the heart. In a moment there was a loud outcry : "The holy man of Mewar, the Rana's chief soothsayer, is dead !" And the prince, so deeply attached was he to the man, forgot all decorum and dropping the hand of his bride,—an unpardonable insult to her and her family,—ran to the corpse and knelt for some moments in lamentation over it. Then rising he faced the angry Haras and Lallaji who demanded to know how he dared to insult his daughter thus. But the young man, not realising how the death had come about, overwhelmed the company with reproaches and threats.. Then what had been but a few minutes earlier a scene of happiness and the friendliest festivity became a pandemonium of shouts and curses. The women fled in tears to their apartments, while the men drew their swords and flew at each other's throats. In the confusion the Mewar prince and his followers were driven from the castle ignominiously.

Such an untoward incident could have but one ending. The Rana, enraged at the death of the holy man and the treatment accorded to his son, sent the latter at the head of an army to besiege the castle of Bumaoda.

But the Haras were no cravens to yield their stronghold at the demand of even so powerful a prince as the lord of Mewar, and the siege went on for months. At last it fell out that when spring came Lallaji and his followers, according to hallowed Rajput custom, issued from the castle to hunt the boar that they might make the annual sacrifice of a great tusker to Gouri. And the prince of Mewar, taking mean advantage of their pious necessity, attacked them as they hunted. A fierce battle was fought. Many fell on both sides and among them Lallaji the Hara Chief and the prince of Mewar.

Then there was great lamentation. The dead were gathered and the corpses of father and son-in-law elect were placed on the funeral pyres. The widow of Lallaji mounted into the flames to die with her lord, and her daughter seated herself on the prince's pyre with his head resting, in her lap according to custom. Ere the flames leapt up around her she cursed the two houses. "Woe! Woe!" she said. "Cursed and dire will be the day when Mewar and Boondi shall meet together at the Spring hunt! Never shall Rana and Rao meet, there but death shall follow."

In the fulness of time the curse had its first fulfilment. The Rana of Lallaji's time was dead, and a new lord reigned over Mewar. And it happened that he marched out through Boondi to punish some Pathans who had

invaded a distant portion of his dominions and laid the land waste. When he came to Boondi, he sent a messenger to the Rao bidding him wait upon him to do homage. The Rao, enraged at the arrogant demand, armed five hundred men. He and they, wearing the saffron robe in token that they would conquer or die, attacked the Rana's camp by night and massacred the soldiers as they slept.

The Rana, with the remnant of his retainers, escaped back to Chitore. When he was come there he swore an oath that he would eat no meal till he had captured the city of Boondi. Now that town lay sixty miles away from Chitore and it was strongly fortified. So the Chiefs of Mewar endeavoured to persuade their sovereign to renounce his rash vow ; but, refusing all food, he prepared an army. All this took days and the Rana grew weaker and weaker through starvation, and it was clear that he could not hope to keep his vow and live. At last a compromise was arrived at, one of the nobles saying : "To save the Rana's life and honour, let us build another Boondi here beneath the walls of Chitore."

So an exact counterpart of the Rao's capital was built of mud beyond the walls of Chitore. When it was finished, the Rana and his men attacked the make-believe town. But, when they approached it, to their amazement they were greeted with arrows and bullets, and an armed force rushed from the gates to

defend it. These men were Haras of Boondi led by their Chief who was a paid soldier in the Mewar army. He and his men had just returned from a hunting tour. On learning of the Rana's subterfuge and the mock fulfilment of his vow, they swore that, though they had taken service in Mewar, they would not see even a mimic Boondi taken by storm. So before the mud gates a real battle was fought and the Hara Chief and his handful of men died bravely in defence of their mock capital.

Thus ended the first fulfilment of the *Sati's* curse. For many years after this the relations of the two States were friendly and the royal houses were united by marriages. In the days of Sanga, "the lion of battle," his son and successor Rutna was wedded to Sooja Bai, sister of Soorajmul, Rao of Boondi and the Rao had married Rutna's sister. The brothers-in-law were good friends, bound thus doubly to each other, until, while his father still lived, Rutna was secretly married by proxy to the daughter of the prince of Amber. From this arose great bitterness between them; for, when Sanga died, Rutna did not acknowledge his marriage or claim his bride from Amber. Soorajmul, knowing naught of the Rana's marriage and duped into it by the Raja of Amber, wedded the Rana's unclaimed wife.

Though he must have known that Soorajmul had acted in good faith, Rana Rutna nursed a deep hatred and jealousy towards him; but

outwardly their relations remained entirely cordial.

Now Soorajmul was addicted to opium-eating. All Rajputs take it, but the Rao was a slave to it and knew no moderation. And it happened that on one occasion, having indulged greatly, he fell asleep in the audience hall of Chitore in the presence of the Rana and all his nobles. One of these latter, seeing the Rao fast asleep, no doubt in a most undignified position, amused himself by tickling the ear of the sleeping prince with a straw. But he soon discovered that his jest was a sorry one. The Rao woke up and with an oath sprang to his feet. Before the amazed onlookers could intervene he drew his sword and with one blow struck off the head of the foolish joker. The assembly broke up in confusion, the Rana retiring to his apartments furious with his brother-in-law first for sleeping in his presence and secondly for killing his noble in the audience hall.

Thereafter the friendship of the two princes cooled, and there were those who laboured to embitter Rutna's feelings against Soorajmul. What was it, whispered in their lord's ear many of his court and especially the son of the unfortunate noble who had paid with his life for a childish jest, what was it that brought the Rao so often to Chitore? Not only love for his sister, the Rani. Rutna might be quite sure of that. And his mind thus

poisoned, a little incident served to create in Rutna a resolution to take the life of the man whom he had begun to regard as his unscrupulous rival. The two were sitting at a dinner which had been prepared for them by Sooja Bai with her own hands. Now she loved her brother deeply and, as Rajput chronicles show so many of the women of the race did, she accounted it a higher honour to be born of her house than to have married into one even more exalted. And it fell out that this day Soorajmul eat heartily of all the dishes, while her husband, because he was unwell or irritated, eat very sparingly. Annoyed at his apparent lack of appreciation of her efforts, she taunted him at the end of the meal, saying "the Rao has eaten his food like a tiger; the Rana has toyed with his food like a child."

Rutna took no outward notice of her sneer at the moment, but it filled his heart to overflowing with hatred of his brother-in-law and he plotted to take his life. When Soorajmul left Chitore, Rutna was kindness and friendliness itself and made a tryst with him in the woods of Boondi for the spring hunt. When the time came the Rana rode forth with a gay following and in the forests he met Soorajmul and all was merry-making and good fellowship. They prepared to hunt the boar on the cliffs of Nandta by the western bank of the Chambal river. The beaters had

entered the dense jungle and the two princes were posted near each other in the best place to see the tusker when he was driven from his lair. As they waited and watched, of a sudden Soorajmul heard the hiss of an arrow as it sped from the bow. Turning, he saw that Rutna had fired towards him, the weapon passing close behind his head. He turned towards the Rana to beg him to be more careful, believing that he had fired at some passing deer. Before he had time to utter a word Rutna rushed upon him and struck him to the ground with his sword. The blow was so heavy that it was all but mortal at once. Twisting his scarf round the wound to stay the bleeding, the dying Rao called out to Rutna, as the latter leapt on to his horse, "Escape as you may, you have lost Mewar." At the Rana's side was the son of the man whom Soorajmul had killed in the audience hall at Chitore. When he heard the Rao's threat, he asked tauntingly : "Will the Rana of Mewar leave his work but half done ?" Rutna leapt to the ground and ran towards his brother-in-law. Raising his sword, he was about to strike when with a last effort the dying man, whose arms were of great length, reached out and caught the Rana beneath the knees. The latter, losing hold of his sword, fell right on to Soorajmul. The two gripped each other and an awful struggle ensued for a few seconds. At last getting his knee in his stomach the

Rao pressed his enemy far enough away from him to allow him to pull his dagger from his belt. Another moment and the glittering blade quivered in the Rana's breast; and the brothers-in-law fell back dead almost simultaneously.

Great were the lamentations in Boondi and Chitore when the news of the tragedy came and the women prepared the funeral pyres. Soorajmul's old mother heard of her loss dry-eyed. "The Rao dead! Did he die alone?" she asked proudly. "I will not believe that he whom I held to suck at these breasts; could go from life unattended." Then the pyres were lighted and Sooja Bai, whose gibe had hastened the tragedy, died with the corpse of Rutna, while his sister passed to Indra's heaven with the ashes of the Rao of Boondi. Thus was the *Sati's* curse fulfilled a second time.

The years passed and yet again was the dying bride-widow's curse to take effect. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, when Rajputs were united in their efforts to save their land from the Mahraffa robbers, the Rana of Mewar was Ursi, an austere and arrogant man. It was said that he had not scrupled to kill his nephew, the lawful heir to the *gadi*. At that time the Rao of Boondi was but a youth, Ajit. His father, a great and much beloved ruler, tiring of palace cares and joys, had retired to live a life of

piety and self-denial. The relations of Mewar and Boondi had long been cordial. Soon after his father's abdication the young Rao had occasion to fortify a village called Bilaita, on the borders of Mewar, as a precaution against raids by freebooters who roamed the frontiers of the two states. Bilaita was of no strategic or other value; "scarce could it grow a few worthless mangoes." But there were those at Udaipur who suggested to Ursi that his young neighbour was intent on encroaching upon Mewar territory, and a haughty message was sent bidding Ajit surrender Bilaita forthwith.

The boy had the spirit of his race and he refused. So Ursi, who admired his courage, arranged a meeting; and the two sovereigns discussed the matter in question. So much did they like each other that all dispute as to the "debateable land" was at an end, and Ursi accepted Ajit's cordial invitation to join him in the next year's spring hunt. No sooner, however, did the news of this arrangement become known than both Rana and Rao received warning, the former from his wife who was Ajit's sister-in-law, the latter from his hermit father, begging them to remember the *Sati's* curse. To these forebodings neither would listen and the preparations went forward for the gala hunt.

When spring came, the Rana rode out of Udaipur with a splendid retinue of nobles and huntsmen, and the rendezvous was kept at

the very place which had been so fatal to Soorajmul and Rutna, the cliffs of Nandta by the Chambal stream. Ajit came from Boondi and greeted his neighbour with great heartiness, and that evening the two kings feasted together with their nobles. At midnight, as the young Rao lay in his tent asleep, the prime minister of Mewar came to him. Begging to be forgiven for such an untoward intrusion, he told the astonished prince that he had been commanded to come thus to demand the instant surrender of Bilaita, and he repeated the Rana's supposed words which were of a grossly outrageous nature. This was a lie. Ursi had made himself hated by his arrogance, and this plot to sow dissension between Rana and Rao was concocted by the nobles of Mewar who hoped thus to be rid of a ruler whom they detested.

When the dawn came Ursi, ignorant of the insult offered in his name to his host, greeted him with unchanged friendliness. Ajit, who had lain awake for hours meditating a speedy vengeance for Ursi's duplicity, was puzzled that the Rana gave no sign nor made the slightest reference to Bilaita. The hunting began; but Ajit was ill at ease. Many a time he looked in the direction of Ursi, recalling the curse and the awful events in the same spot so many years before. Each time, however, he thought to ride at the Rana, his courage failed him. At last the day's sport

was over and Ursi, delighted with his entertainment, bade him goodbye. As the senior and the greater king he gave him, in the courteous Indian fashion, leave to ride off towards Boondi. Ajit hesitated. The memory of the treacherous *diwan's* midnight visit filled his heart with hatred. Why should he not then and there make his haughty neighbour pay for his insulting words? Again the Rana courteously bade him go, adding "It will not be, I trust, long ere our next meeting." Believing, perhaps, that this was a veiled taunt, Ajit for only answer couched his hunting lance and rode straight at Ursi, spitting him with its long keen point. "Oh! Hara, what hast thou done?" groaned the Rana, as he fell from the saddle. But Ajit, blinded with his unjust wrath, struck again at the dying prince. Then, the nobles of Mewar spurring their horses and taking to flight, the Rana, seizing the golden disk of the sun from the helmet of the Rana, rallied his men and rode off towards Boondi.

All had fled from Ursi when the blow was struck. Their hated king was dead as they had planned; and they rode off in haste to secure their fortunes with the new Rana. Only one person was loyal to the dead. In the forest the body lay where it fell unhonoured and untended save for a woman, Ursi's mistress. She had followed him to the hunt and now she knelt in grief by her dead lover. With the

help of some peasants she collected wood and built a rude pyre underneath a great shady tree. On this she seated herself with the Rana's head in her lap and as the fuel took light and the flames shot up around her she cried :—"O spreading tree, hear my words and give me a sign. If this man was slain in revenge for the old blood feud, let his slayer go free and unhurt. If he was slain by foul treachery for another cause, let the slayer become a world's wonder ere two months have passed." As she ended, a bough broke and fell upon her; and she knew that Ajit would be punished.

And Rajput legend declares that within two months a foul and unknown disease attacked the young Rao. His flesh dropped off piece-meal from his bones and all the world of India wondered and shuddered at his fate.



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